

Horror films with Indie Spirit

Written by Shaun Lilley
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On April 23, over 60 filmmakers gathered in Colorado Springs, CO for three days of cinematic bliss at the 3rd Annual Indie Spirit Film Festival. The event showcased over 100 films from all over the world, with four theaters running at a time from morning till night. The features, shorts and documentaries ranged from experimental to narrative, and covered everything from abduction to zombies.

Though this was not strictly a fright-film fest, it had plenty to offer genre fans. In the horror and sci-fi shorts section, eight films were screened, including my own YETI, Andrew Kasch's THIRSTY and the Shumway Brothers' ENIGMA. THIRSTY is a hilarious look at what a man will do for a slushy even when facing hot alien chicks and a crazed ax-wielding maniac, while ENIGMA is a sci-fi/action piece boasting amazing special FX.



I really lucked out when it turned out that the only other director from this section to attend the festival was ENIGMA's Jason Shumway. As we were the only two on stage for the filmmaker Q&A after the screenings, we were able to answer many questions about our individual movies. The audience nonetheless got a sense of the wide range of work being created in the independent field: ENIGMA took five years to complete by filmmakers with some Hollywood experience on a budget of over \$40,000, while YETI was a student project lensed on 16mm that only cost about \$400 to produce.

Where the features were concerned, I was able to attend Michael Craft's STORAGE, Faye Jackson's STRIGOI and Marion Kerr's GOLDEN EARRINGS. I was also able to meet Kerr and her cast, who are all based in LA, and their real-world friendship bring a unique chemistry to the young filmmaker's first feature, making it a great success. (GOLDEN EARRINGS wound up winning the fest's Most Horrifying Feature prize, while the Short award went to Rafael Martinez's ZOMBIES AND CIGARETTES.) Of the three, STRIGOI takes the cake in terms of the strange; I had fallen for their excellent poster and tagline—"Vampires don't just drink your blood anymore!"—and had to see it. Also described as "a folklore murder mystery with comedy

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and horror and chickens,” it was especially fun to watching with an American audience, as capitalism plays a significant role in the story.



Even the documentary section was infected with the horror bug. ZOMBIE GIRL: THE MOVIE follows the production of PATHOGEN, a feature made by Emily Hagins, a 12-year-old from Texas with a taste for zombies. The chronicle of Emily and her ever-supportive mother finding their way through their first production was inspiring, as the same learning experiences that occur on every set are seen through the eyes of this unique duo. I was excited to see ZOMBIE GIRL for weeks prior to the festival, and made sure to be at the very first screening. As it turned out, there were only a handful of audience members at this 9 a.m. show, but they seemed to enjoy themselves. Hagins' new movie THE RETELLING premiered at the recent Texas Frightmare Weekend; for more information on Hagins and her projects, check out her [website](#) .

{jcomments on}