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New faces in indie film

The Grand's Philip Cowan believes the 25 New Faces of Independent Film festival can put Tacoma on the map

Rev. Adam McKinney on August 19th, 2010



"HABIBI RASAK KHARBAN": The first feature film from Susan Youssef, one of the new faces of independent film coming to Tacoma. Courtesy photo

The concept of a "new face" entering a medium - whether it be comedy, music or, in this case, film - can be something of a misnomer. Or the idea promises more than it can deliver. We hope that those deciding which faces are newest are not too reactionary or working from an ulterior motive, but this is, of course, not always the case.

My feeling, though, is that in the case of film, it may be harder for the powers-that-be to slip us a ringer disguised as a new face. I think that it's generally harder to fool people when it comes to film, and when

Filmmaker Magazine chooses its 25 New Faces of Independent Film,

they do so with the knowledge that these filmmakers are concerned with matters artistic, not commercial.

This year's 25 New Faces, as chosen by *Filmmaker Magazine*, will be showcased at the Grand Cinema, starting on Aug. 20, in what is apparently the first film festival modeled after the magazine's list.

"It's kind of a built-in festival, if you wanted to put it together, but I was curious if anyone had ever tried to do that," says Philip Cowan, executive director of The Grand Cinema. "I assumed someone probably had, but I got in touch with *Filmmaker Magazine*, and nobody had ever done that. They had talked about it, but nobody had ever tried to pull it together. So they were on board."

The idea is to assemble the work of these 25 New Faces - or most of it, anyway - and there you have a festival. Most of these filmmakers are young, innovative people whose daring projects impressed early on.

I had the opportunity to talk with some of the filmmakers who will be coming to Tacoma to speak about the films

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that they will be screening.

Susan Youssef is Brooklyn-born, but now resides in Amsterdam, which is where she had the misfortune of talking to me at 11 p.m., thanks to my ignorance of the time difference. She loves talking about film, she told me, and so the time of day was no issue.

Youssef embraced her Middle Eastern roots, and starting getting attention, when she shot *Forbidden to Wander*, a documentary that was the first film set in Gaza in over 15 years.

"I really tried to avoid making films, I really tried to avoid being an artist," says Youssef. "My parents were immigrants to the US, so I sort of wanted to be professional and be there for my family, and not be a struggling artist."

Fortunately, after six years of fighting her desire to be an artist, she gave in and enrolled in film school.

After the success of *Forbidden to Wander* and several other shorts, she has made her first feature film, an adaptation of a parable from the 12th century. *Habibi Rasak Kharban* concerns young love that is forbidden by the conservative Palestinian laws.

Robert Machoian and Rodrigo Ojeda-Beck - also appearing in support of their films - are a uniquely collaborative team of filmmakers. They split the duties of filming, directing and writing completely down the middle, often switching jobs back and forth between shoots.

"We found a collaboration that just worked really well and we just decided to see how far we could push it," says Machoian

Their work is experimental, but with a feel for naturalism. The writing process for their films often does not involve writing, but a rather a series of discussions. Setting aside ego, as they do, and allowing another person to share the reins equally is a difficult thing to do, and one that they have mastered.

Lastly, I caught up with Holden Abigail Osborne, a very personal filmmaker.

She will be appearing with her two-part short film, entitled *Solitary/Release*. *Solitary* is a documentary about her brother Zach's reentry into the world after being released from prison. *Release* is a fiction film based on Zach's struggles, with James Franco in the role of Zach, and Osborne's own father as himself.

"(Zach) sort of consulted on the script," says Osborne. "(The two films) in the beginning weren't supposed to play together, but I realized once I finished the fiction film that they really were a perfect pair."

Philip Cowan is excited at the prospect that the festival may help to put Tacoma on the map, and I agree. We bring Tacoma to the masses by bringing the masses to Tacoma - one great film at a time.

The Grand Cinema

25 New Faces of Independent Film

Friday, Aug. 20-Thursday, Aug. 26

606 S. Fawcett Ave., Tacoma

253.593.4474

Film schedule with starting times [here](#)

Comments for New faces in indie film (1)

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Know it all said on Aug. 20, 2010 at 10:12pm

I don't see how 25 faces of anything is going to help put Tacoma on the map in terms of film festivals like for instance Austin, Texas's SWSX. Precisely because Tacoma does NOT have the following things: a SXSW, a University of Texas film school program, a kinda cool movie called Slacker that was filmed there, and a multitude of multimedia heads. 25 faces did not make Austin's SXSW laurels suddenly mean something on a DVD case, the people of the city made that happen. So don't wait around for people to come to you Tacoma, you are going to have to take it to the next level if you want to really have bragging rights. What Tacoma does have, is not making very good use of in my eyes. Perhaps once the grunge nut was busted, that's all the NW had. But I don't believe that shit for a second. I believe

there is a Renaissance to be had. And I believe it's up to NW film makers to make it happen. But what that means is, actually making good films. And that isn't easy unless the writing talent is there.

Here's what I don't get. So the folks from Quiet Shoes recently had a feature out. Why in the blue fk didn't that get entered into the TFF? Rah, rah, go home team and all that. I thought it was Tacoma noir at it's finest? Or is TFF only about throwing local film under the bus to make way for 25 useless new faces?? Or did QS simply suck so bad that it wasn't worth a TFF finale showing? Couldn't have been much worse than last years The Immaculate Conception of Little Dizzle.

Come on Tacoma writers. It's not hard to get film equipment. But writing a story that makes Film Magazine want to put you into it's 25 face list, is obviously.

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