

Losers are winners at the 20th Annual Atlantic Film Festival

By Stephan MacLeod

At this year's Atlantic Film Festival, a few themes popped up in the selection of films. With three movies that have the word *bingo* in their titles, motifs seem unavoidable. I was able to catch two of the bingo films during the opening weekend, *Bingo! The Documentary*, and *The Bingo Robbers*, along with a few other movies that are not related to bingo. But like the game of *Bingo!*, all the movies I saw had more losers than winners in them.

Bingo! The Documentary

Seattle filmmaker, John Jeffcoat explores the different cultural aspects of bingo and the obsession people have with it in *Bingo! The Documentary*. From all-gay bingo events to the Carnival bingo cruise-ship to the smoke-filled bingo halls that seem to pop up in almost every city in North America and Britain, this documentary is full of hilarious characters that are either flamboyant drag queens, mundane housewives, or pseudo-hip Generation X-ers.

The Target Shoots First

Christopher Wilcha brought a video camera to work everyday to document his experience at Columbia House, the mailorder music club, and made the film, *The Target Shoots First*. A punk music enthusiast without any experience in marketing, Wilcha was hired because Columbia House was looking to cash in on the alternative music market during the height of Nirvana's success. While trying to radically change Columbia House's approach to selling music, he discovers that the corporate pol-

itics of working for a major company begins to change him.

Chungking Express

The highlight of the festival was the Canadian Director's Series hosted by Canadian pop culture icon Don McKellar. I was able to catch Wong Kar-Wai's 1994 film, *Chungking Express*, presented by Quebec director of *The Red Violin* and *32 Short Films about Glenn Gould*, François Girard. Girard brought *Chungking Express* to give an example of the innovative films coming out of Hong Kong. *Chungking Express* explores four characters through interweaving love stories and kinetic, impressionistic style of colours and repetitive music.

The Bingo Robbers

The Newfoundland film, *The Bingo Robbers*, was another movie that stylishly told an unlikely love story. Lois Brown and Barry Newhook, from Atlantic Canada's finest rock group, Fur Packed Action, wrote, directed, and star in this low budget, digital feature film. These filmmakers show a lot of promise with innovative editing techniques and charming, hilarious characters, but the film lacked a cohesive screenplay, and would have made a better short film than feature.

The Worst Jewish Football Team in the World

The Worst Jewish Football Team in the World is an inspiring short documentary about a soccer team that loses all its games, but plays for the sake of playing. The members of the team enjoy themselves despite their lack of talent, and through fair

play and determination, this group of young losers seem to understand sports can mean so much more than just competition and defeat.

Heimspiel

A feature documentary that focuses on a winning team is the East German film, *Heimspiel*. This movie shows how rivalry affects the fans of an East German hockey team. Resentment between hockey fans from the East and West Germany escalates to a roar during games between both teams. Ultimately, this documentary reveals that despite the fall of the Berlin Wall, a barrier that still exists between German people is evident in a hockey rink.

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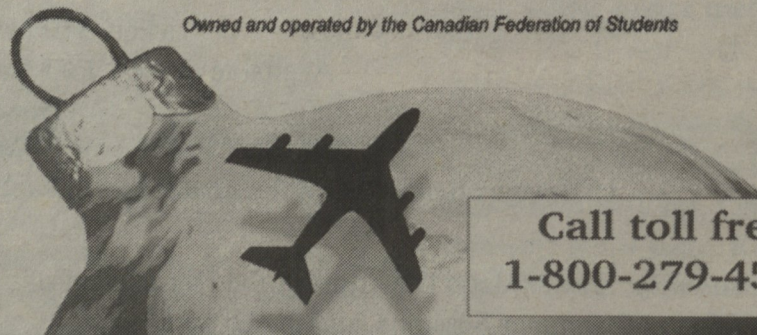
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