

Interviews: Red Carpet at Chicago LGBT International Film Festival Reeling31

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CHICAGO – In November of 2013, the 31st annual Chicago LGBT International Film Festival, also known as “Reeling31,” provided a week long showcase for gay filmmakers. There were many new voices in the mix, and they were on the Red Carpet on opening night of the Fest.

HollywoodChicago.com was on the scene, which took place at the historic Music Box Theatre in Chicago. The stars of the opening night feature film, “G.B.F.,” were there for interviews and photos, plus filmmakers and actors from the films “Burning Blue,” “The Happy Sad” and “Truth” – which were shown throughout the week – also walked the fabled Red Carpet.

The “Reeling” Festival is currently sponsoring a free film series in Chicago, the fourth annual “Cinema Q.” The last week of the series will present “De-Lovely” (2004) – starring Kevin Kline as Cole Porter – on March 26th, 6:30pm, at Chicago’s Cultural Center, 78 East Washington Street.



Actor Paul Iacono, portrayed Brent Van Camp in “G.B.F.”

The opening night film was “G.B.F.,” which stands for Gay Best Friend. This breezy and funny high school comedy concerns the efforts of the popular girls at the school desiring the title character. It was directed by Darren Stein, who had made a previous splash with his film, “Jawbreaker.”

Paul Iacono has been acting since the age of four, and made numerous appearances on “The Rosie O’Donnell Show” as a young singer and performer. He is probably best known portraying the title character in the MTV series “The Hard Times of RJ Berger.”

HollywoodChicago.com: As we stand at this film fest, do you think as a young actor that someday there will be no distinction or category for LGBT films, as the distinction of being gay becomes less of a big deal?

Paul Iacono: I think it is less of a big deal every minute, I think that the line is blurring, and the younger generation doesn’t see a line at all. This film I think will spark new genre-centric films with gay protagonists.

HollywoodChicago.com: How did director Darren Stein create the right atmosphere for your character of Brent Van Camp in ‘G.B.F.’?



Paul Iacono at ‘Reeling31,’ November, 2013

Photo credit: Patrick McDonald for HollywoodChicago.com

Iacono: Darren and I had known each other socially, and I always felt he was a quality individual. When he told me about this project, I was dumbstruck about how cool it sounded, almost too good to be true. After that, there was a table read for producers in Manhattan, and two months after that we were on set. The character of Brent is molded from other iconic queer characters in film, a little Emory [Cliff Gorman] from 'The Boys in the Band,' and a little Rupert Everett in 'My Best Friend's Wedding.'

HollywoodChicago.com: Have you ever been in a real 'Gay Best Friend' situation, and how did it affect your point of view regarding these type of friendships?

Iacono: I've never seen it so black and white like that. I have friends, I guess, that would consider me a G.B.F., but I don't consider them my 'Straight Best Girlfriend,' they're just my friends. And that is what I think the film gets at – labels are old hat and friends are friends and love is love.

HollywoodChicago.com: Since you portrayed RJ Berger for a couple of years on MTV's 'The Hard Times of RJ Berger,' what did you really understand about the character?

Iacono: Mostly insecurity, and not knowing my own voice yet. I was playing him as if I had one foot still in the closet. The people on the set knew, but it was something at the time I wasn't comfortable talking about – I was 21 years old in 2010. By the time I finished the show, I related a lot to RJ.

HollywoodChicago.com: When you talk about your love for acting, what's the first thing you talk about?

Iacono: Jack Nicholson. 'One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest' is my favorite film. I'm a Virgo, and I like things a certain way, and performances that inspire me, inspire me greatly. And with Nicholson, it always goes back to him when I talk about acting.



Actresses Molly Tarlov and Andrea Bowen of "G.B.F."

Molly Tarlov also is featured in the MTV series "Awkward." Andrea Bowen is a former child actor, who made her stage debut in the legendary Broadway play, "Les Misérables" (as the youngest actress, at age 6, to portray Young Cossette) and also portrayed Julie Mayer in the ABC series, "Desperate Housewives."

HollywoodChicago.com: Molly, have you ever had a Gay Best Friend, and at some point in that relationship can it become more trendy than intimate?

Molly Tarlov: I have two best friends who happen to be gay, and we met in college, so there is nothing trendy about us whatsoever. [laughs] It probably is the opposite, because we spent a lot of time talking about Ibsen, who may have been trendy a long time ago, but not anymore.

HollywoodChicago.com: Andrea, what is fun about being on a Darren Stein set, and getting to play in a story such as this?

Andrea Bowen: Darren attracts really wonderful people. In looking back at the experience, I'm grateful for the wonderful friendships I've made. As far as Darren's style as a director, he was open to being playful and bringing up suggestions, and the set felt like a big collaboration, that we're all really proud of.

HollywoodChicago.com: Molly, what was the best piece of acting advice you've ever received?



Molly Tarlov, Andrea Bowen at 'Reeling31'

Photo credit: Patrick McDonald for HollywoodChicago.com

Tarlov: I studied at the Atlantic Theater in New York City in their summer intensive, and there was a book that the founders of that theater wrote called 'The Practical Handbook for the Actor.' Whenever the creator of a stage, TV or film work does their job, and wherever you are in the moment, just be there, so it's never false.

HollywoodChicago.com: Andrea, you've been acting since a very young age, what trait in performance have you kept with you since childhood, even as you got older?

Bowen: I've always tried to be as self unaware as possible in performance, so I guess it's that. I've been fortunate to be a part of many different and wonderful projects, with a chance to play a lot of different kinds of characters. Because of that, it's just trying to stay as honest and in-the-moment as possible, and even that changes as I've gotten older.

HollywoodChicago.com: Molly, you're entering your third season on the MTV series, 'Awkward.' Recently, show creator Lauren Iungerich was replaced. What was that transition like for the cast?

Tarlov: I'm going to miss Lauren on a personal and professional level. But the cast met the new guys who are now running the show [Chris Alberghini and Mike Chessler], they're nice and excited about doing the show. It's two new fresh pair of eyes and it's going to be interesting to see what happens.

HollywoodChicago.com: Andrea, what was the most exciting Broadway stage production that you've been a part of, and what is your favorite backstage story regarding that show?

Bowen: In terms of excitement, it was "Les Misérables," because it was my first show, and I credit it for giving me the love of the arts. My favorite backstage memory was about how young I was, just six years old, and I had to carry a big bucket on and off stage. One of the other actresses had to push me, and I fell right into the bucket. Mortifying at the time, but a fun memory now.



Director D.M.V. Greer, Lead Actor Trent Ford of "Burning Blue"

HollywoodChicago.com: What was the inspiration for the film 'Burning Blue'?

D.M.V. Greer: It was drawn from my stage play of the same name. I wrote the play about 20 years ago, and it made its debut in London in 1995. At the time, it did get some interest from Hollywood, to make a gay 'Top Gun,' but the play was nothing like that. After we toyed around with the studios, I finally decided to make the film myself about three years ago, and a friend who was an indie film casting agent found me Trent Ford, who became the lead actor.

Trent Ford: The term 'Burning Blue' was pulled from a poem from a downed Canadian air pilot. It speaks not only of not just the aspirations of a combat man and fighter pilot, but just in general it has an Icarus-type quality. We push our mortality to the limits, we look into the face of God, and we're not afraid. It is the unofficial poem of all those lost in service by flying aircraft. That meant a lot to me.



D.M.V. Greer, Trent Ford at 'Reeling31'

Photo credit: Patrick McDonald for HollywoodChicago.com

Greer: Some people might be familiar with the poem when the space shuttle Challenger was lost in 1986, Ronald Reagan read that poem to the nation.

HollywoodChicago.com: Is the main issue gays in the military in this film?

Greer: It is, but more than it's about love and friendship in all of its alliterations, and between men.

HollywoodChicago.com: What is the most personal element of the play and screenplay in regard to your experiences?

Greer: It's pretty much my story. I don't know if I can parse it, but I think to me it's about a romantic love triangle between men, but also the platonic triangle between Trent's character and two of his friends. It's about how they all are dealing with how their love and lives are taking unexpected turns.

Ford: The three could have co-existed, I believe, but it is also about the witchhunt that is happening, which is purposefully blind. They were

looking for problems with the flight squadron, which could be alcoholism or eyesight issues, but in the end they were willing to ascribe all of that to the idea that homosexuality is a virus that is making everybody incapable of operating an aircraft.

The personal bit in the film for me was when I was dressing to go in front of the tribunal, and in that group was my character's father, who is the Chief of Operations. My own father flew these planes, and he told he knew there were 'funky guys' in the outfit who liked men, but he never asked too many questions. When I asked him what he would have done if one of those guys confided in him, or told him that they loved him? He furrowed his brow, and was silent. It's the idea that so many of these talented guys put their lives on the line, and then was pushed away and put in the corner, it just doesn't make any sense.

HollywoodChicago.com: What's the first thing you talk about when you talk about your love for acting?

Ford: I've always wanted to do something and be something, and put it out on the line. The most important thing for me in the profession is stillness. When you know the lines well enough, and understand them well enough, take a moment to feel those lines and have faith in yourself, and it all comes out.



LeRoy McClain, Lead Actor in "The Happy Sad."

HollywoodChicago.com: How is this film a good fit for this festival?

LeRoy McClain: 'The Happy Sad' is very now. It's dealing with a group of twentysomethings who are navigating contemporary social and sexual morality, and finding their way through life as they find their in, out and through one another. You watch them figure themselves out, and figure out the world. It's an age in which they think they know everything, but really know nothing.

HollywoodChicago.com: What is the most personal element of yourself in the character of Marcus?



McClain: I think Marcus is a guy who is racked with indecision, a character who finds himself at the beginning of the journey as sure of himself, sure he knows who he is, what he wants out of life and who his partner is. But as I said, he realizes slowly but surely he doesn't know anything. The issues of fidelity and identity all get challenged through the course of the film. It was a personal process, because I figured things out about the character as Marcus figured them out.

HollywoodChicago.com: What is best piece of acting advice you'd ever received and how do you apply it to characters you've played in your career?

McClain: Simplicity and specificity, and finding the nexus in which those two traits intertwine is the key to a successful performance. It's all about distilling down the essentials, and conveying them in a clear, concise manner.

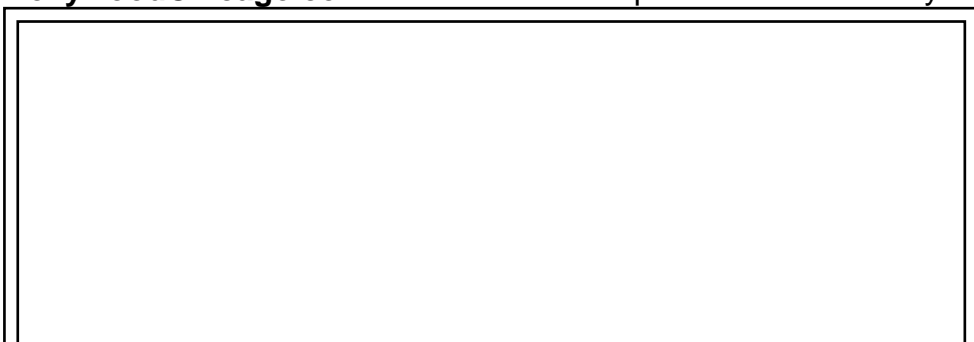


Writer/Director Rob Moretti of "Truth."

HollywoodChicago.com: How will your film connect to the audience at this film festival?

Rob Moretti: The subject matter is something that a lot of people don't like to talk about, but it happens. I wanted to do something that was completely different, off the beaten path and what people are afraid to talk about.

HollywoodChicago.com: What is the most personal element of you in the screenplay of the film?





Rob Moretti of 'Truth'
Photo credit: TLA Video

Moretti: There are a lot of personal elements for both Sean [Paul Lockhart, who portrays Caleb] and I. For Sean, it was everything about him and horses, he loves horses. For me, there is a part of the film in which my character talks about being a recovering alcoholic and drug addict – which is very personal.

HollywoodChicago.com: When you talk about your love of filmmaking, what do you talk about first?

Moretti: I can remember being just three or four years old, wanting to go inside the television to perform, because I thought that is what you could do. When I was six years old, I packed up all my toys and told my parents I was going to Hollywood to be a star. [laughs] That's how passionate I was.

HollywoodChicago.com: What screenplay in the history of cinema would you have liked to land on your desk, for a chance to direct?

Moretti: "Misery." My film "Truth" has many of the elements of that type of thriller, with a suspenseful, edge-of-the-seat type edge. And I love Kathy Bates.

The 2014 Chicago LGBT International Film Festival, "Reeling32" is schedule for September 18th-25th, 2014. [Click here](#) [20] for more information.



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