

The 40-hour Edinburgh International Film Festival experience

A few words from our EIFF competition winner, Laura Clarke.

The excitement surrounding the *56th Edinburgh International Film Festival* was in full swing; little did I know that I would be attending the Opening Night party! As winner of the star prize in the EIFF competition, run by this very magazine, I also had the chance to view a selection of films months before they go on general UK release.

After jetting into the festival city early on 14th August, the first film of the day was *My Little Eye*. Director *Mark Evans* lets the Big Brother television genre fuel his relativity in forming a captivating horror film. This film was very impressive, mainly because it really seemed to bring something new to reality TV – quite a challenge after our television screens have been so saturated with this genre recently.

The ‘creepy ass house’ that *My Little Eye* is set in, is a polar opposite of the house’s television reality TV shows have used. The house that Evans built is anything but the safe haven that the high security fences and unpopulated landscape implies.

As the audience you are thrown into the film at the last 42 days of the characters experience. Evans shows his innovative talent of moving time on with the use of split screen and nail-biting music. The use of night vision footage not only gives the film that voyeuristic feel that is a prime part of the reality TV genre but also a twist of forcing intimacy with the characters and their emotions. This film is not to be missed by filmgoers with a love of modern horror!

Before the opening night film began, *Shane Danielsen*, the artistic director of the festival, spoke a few words. Danielsen concentrated on the importance of cinema and the magic of sitting amongst strangers enjoying the much loved artistic form, the film.

Lynne Ramsay’s Morvern Callar was the opening night film and what an opening night film it was! Not only is the director female but also Scottish – very fitting at this particular film festival. The ordinary life in crisis story in *Morven Callar* pulls on you’re the heart strings as we watch how the suicide of character Morven’s (*Samantha Morton*) partner enables her to escape her bleak existence in a small Scottish town and find a new life. Ramsay takes you through the highs and more often than not the lows of Morven with her raw film making style accompanied with an outstanding performance by *Samantha Morton*. *Lynne Ramsay* and the cast turn *Alan Warner’s* novel into a highly emotional cinematic experience with feel good vibes.

After seeing *Morven Callar*, it was off to the Opening Night party. The party took place at the *Corn Exchange*; a very impressive venue and the party had a great atmosphere. Thursday saw a mother of all hangovers after a night of free drinks then it was off to the *Mirrorball McLaren Animation* screening.

With the increase of MTV style TV channels; animated videos have always been a popular choice in the music industry. The British have actually turned out to be rather good at this, with *Shynola* being regarded as the leaders in the promo animation field. The *Shynola* team showed three of their animations in this 80minute animation feast. EIFF regulars *Shynola*, teamed up with DJ *James Lavelle* to produce an animation about the force of aggression with underlying anti-war messages - *Eye for an Eye*. The whole animation was unfortunately not shown because it had its own launch on the 15th August at *The Liquid Rooms*. This was my favourite *Shynola* animation because the characters were so original and didn't have to speak (or even have a full set of facial features!) to show their emotions. *Shynola* seemed to create a believable animated mime movie – innovative or what!? Other than *Shynola*, architects turned 3D animators seemed the focal point in this *Mirrorball* presentation. My personal favourite being a *Sam Arthur* animation for *Royksopp's* song *Poor Leno*.

Tim Hope was definitely my favourite animator overall, with his distinct style that seemed beautifully melancholic. Highly processed live action material set in amazingly detailed unreal landscapes gives his animation the creative edge.

Edinburgh is for sure the best place to be (film not weather wise) in August. The atmosphere around the city is unbeatable and unique. The festival was well organised and busy but not crowded. I whole-heartedly recommend getting yourself to Edinburgh next year to catch some films and soak up the buzz. I thoroughly enjoyed my time there and hope to go again next year, but this time probably not with a press pass!

Laura Clarke, EIFF competition winner.