

Director's miraculous short plays in multi-media event



Eric Wetz, Salma Rosey and Franco Reins star in "The Incurruptible of Bell and Devon."

Traveling in Italy last winter, director Anthony Collamati visited old churches and witnessed "saints on display whose bodies have not decayed. Incurruptibility," as this phenomenon is called, "is a documented phenomenon in the Catholic church," Collamati says.

Collamati transplanted this concept to the center of Chicago's South Asian community for his short film "The Incurruptible of Bell and Devon." It premiered this week as part of the multi-media event, "Sugar in the Raw."

Creating "The Incurruptible" was a brief detour from the final post sound work on Collamati's debut feature "The Acedia Thing," which Mark Messing is overseeing at Maestro-Matic with an expected completion date within a few weeks.

"When 'Sugar in the Raw' curator Laura Chiamonte and I were talking about my participating, we originally thought it would be 'Acedia,'" Collamati said. "But then I got so taken with this idea of exploring the question of what is miraculous, and who has the authority to declare what is miraculous."

"The Incurruptible" is told through two Catholic priests' investigation of a Bangladeshi boy whose body, like those of the Italian saints, has not decayed.

The 25-minute digital video features David Newmann ("Stir of Echoes") and Roderick Peeples ("Novocain").

Collamati's Bangladeshi co-workers introduced him to the Bangladeshi Association of Chicago. They in turn put him in touch with collaborators from that community, including production manager Farhad Hossain and actors Rehan Reza and Suman Raj Khurana.

"The conditions of the shoot mirrored what I intended with the script," Collamati said, "bringing together people from these wildly different cultures and backgrounds."

"Acedia" producer Rob Hanlin produced "The Incurruptible." Collamati shot along with "Acedia" editor Neal Gold ("Design.") Sound is by Robert Aguilar. (Full disclosure: this writer was first AD on "Acedia.")

"Sugar in the Raw" features multi-media work by Creative Arts Melting Pot and Tracy Taylor, dance by Casey Pennel, and films by Xenia Shin, Eileen Reynolds, and Jason Hooker.

Collamati's "Acedia" feature in post

Within weeks of the "Acedia" premiere, Collamati will have a final mix of his feature "The Acedia Thing."

To write the score, Mark Messing of Maestro-Matic secured the musical services of noted Chicago composers Darren Richard and Mack Hagood of the bands Pinetop 7 and Grand Isle. Chicago rock outfits We Ragazzi and Pan American are contributing songs to the soundtrack.

Collamati and co-director Darren McDonald self-financed principal photography, then raised the post budget with producers Hanlin and Brian Marshall.

Collamati and McDonald made the movie in fall 2001, the first film for both directors. "It was the most intensive education I've ever had," said Collamati, who was fresh from the graduate literature program at Loyola at the time. "I can't see the learning curve ever being as sharp as it was on 'Acedia.'"

The script was inspired by the "loneliness and isolation" Collamati saw among the young Chicago transplants he knew as a grad student, "even though we were always going out." He stumbled on the lynchpin of the film, "Acedia," through an Australian professor who was writing a book about the social history of "post-modern ennui."

"I know it sounds like a terribly pretentious subject, but it's not," Collamati said. "These things that poets and psychologists are talking about today, and people get prescription drugs for, was called Acedia in the Fourth Century, and it had its own demon and it was one of the eight deadly sins."

"Acedia," which is surprisingly light considering its weighty themes, follows four friends facing different forms of Acedia in their work and love lives. They are played by Ryan Rentmeester, Katrina Lenk, producer Rob Hanlin, and Anthony Mosely, artistic director of Collaboraction Theater.

DP was Tomomi Itaya. Junko Kajino was production manager.

The next hurdle is the blowup to film from DV, which will entail another round of fundraising. Meanwhile, the filmmakers are seeking festivals with digital projection options as they prepare to begin fest submissions.

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