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NOT A NICHE: INTERVIEW WITH DANIEL BECK, UK GREEN FILM FESTIVAL DIRECTOR

Bojana Jankovic on 27/05/14 with comments

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As ice melts, floods ravage parts of Europe and Londoners face the fact that late May is not the time to store away their coats, the UK Green Film Festival is getting ready to kick start its fourth edition.

Don't expect a lecture or guilt-tripping though - the festival takes both its subject matter and audiences seriously, delivering an exciting selection of films whose artistic ambition is not second to their message.

Run Riot sat down with Festival Director Daniel Beck: we found out how the festival is curated, why environmental film is not a genre, and whether the green talking to green doing ratio needs to change.

Daniel Beck: It's a massive step forward that we now live in a world where it is accepted by the majority of people that climate change is influenced by human actions.

It's our mission as a film festival to bring the best films from around the world that deal with some of these issues to UK cinemas. We want to inspire people to connect as individuals to the massive global effort that's required to achieve a healthy, diverse and sustainable future for our planet.

Run Riot: Has environmental film established itself as a genre in its own right? What sets it apart from (other) documentaries?

Daniel Beck: I don't think so. In many ways the worst thing that could happen is for films dealing with environmental concerns to be pigeonholed in to their own category.

Run Riot: The films taking part in the festival seem to cover every corner of the world - from Greenland to Cambodia and from London to Brazil. Can you introduce us to the programme?

Daniel Beck: We have a truly fantastic mix of films this year with award winners and premieres throughout the first week of June. We're screening in 17 different independent cinemas nationwide and the programme includes films from all corners of the globe.

Run Riot: What can you tell us about the way the festival is curated? How do you balance artistic and environmental criteria within the selection?

Daniel Beck: We operate slightly differently to most film festivals, lots of other festivals programme a whole bunch of films and show them all in a single town/city.

We want people to come to UK Green Film Festival screenings from all backgrounds and to leave having enjoyed a great movie and a newly acquired knowledge or understanding of the issues dealt with in our films.

Run Riot: A short film will precede each of the seven feature length films in the festival; do they provide an introduction or additional context to the features?

Daniel Beck: Last year we very carefully matched the shorts to offer an insight in to the subject covered by the feature. This year we've taken a slightly different approach, it didn't quite sit right with us that these exceptionally crafted shorts were reduced to a teaser or supporting role to the feature film they were paired with.

Run Riot: Does environmental film get enough space outside of festivals? What are the chances of seeing one of the films in the programme at a later date?

Daniel Beck: We're getting there, distributors like Dogwoof are doing exceptional work bringing more environmentally themed films to UK audiences and we've had some break-through successes over the past few years with some truly exceptional films such as Blackfish, Chasing Ice and last year's UK Green Film Festival Audience Award winner More Than Honey.

Run Riot: How do environmental concerns reflect on the festival behind the scenes? What is green about how the UK Green Film Festival is run?

Daniel Beck: Without boring on about the finer details of the recycled print materials we use, probably the greenest thing about us is that we're absolutely tiny. We operate with a team of just 3-4 part-timers, a few volunteers and a whole bunch of favours.

UK Green Film Festival

1st - 8th June

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