

Thursday, July 29, 2010

Roxbury Film Festival

“Speed-Dating” gets audience laughing in three minutes or less



“Speed-Dating” is one of 50 featured films at the 12th Annual Roxbury Film Festival. The movie follows three best friends as they look for love in all the wrong places. (Photo courtesy of Roxbury International Film Festival)

Shelly Runyon

The 12th Annual Roxbury International Film Festival will open with a laugh over the feel-good comedy, “Speed-Dating.” The first viewing of the film during the festival will be at the opening night celebration today at the Museum of Fine Arts.

“Speed-Dating” is guaranteed to put a smile on audience’s faces. The story is about three best-guy-friends: “Dog,” the chubby romantic; “Beaver,” the metro-sexual friend with a mind for business and “Too Cool,” the rich playboy, searching for love in all the wrong places.

It is a coming of age story of sorts. The trio, who share Too Cool’s inherited mansion, spends each weekend going on speed dates hoping for a one-night relationship. In three minutes or less they meet a series of girls, each one more crazy than the last.

These hook-ups end in early-morning separations — “Walk of Shame” spelled out in gold lettering behind each girl as she struts down the stairs and out the door.

The friends bond and bicker over their experiences and friendship, as one by one, they mature and give love a shot. And just when the movie is feeling clichéd, the plot twists and hilarity ensues.

One liners, slapstick and audacious comic risks — including Chris Elliot as Health Inspector Red Green in blue-face — create a whimsical and entertaining film. The most touching moments come with a stand-out performance from Holly Robinson Peete as Gayle Coolidge, Too Cool's biological and estranged mother.

In their own subplot Too Cool, played by Wesley Jonathan, and his mother, are shown in flashbacks of their past life. Homeless, they fight off hunger by dancing alone in the streets. Shortly after, young Too Cool is adopted by an aunt who made it rich producing video games, but this separation from his mother desensitized him to the feelings of everyone around him.

As Too Cool ventures down this path of emotional self-discovery, funny moments intermix with the serious — including a karmic walk of shame in nothing but a diaper — making “Speed-Dating,” a great mix of real drama and laughs.

Voted Audience Favorite at the Pan African Film & Arts Festival in February, lighthearted “Speed-Dating” is a must-see contribution to the Roxbury International Film Festival.

During the festival, more than 50 films from seven countries will be screened over four days in theaters throughout Boston and Cambridge. Genres range from provocative documentaries to witty narrative features.

Highlights of the festival include: “American Faust: From Condi to Neo Condi,” a documentary about Condoleezza Rice as President Bush's confidante; “Soul Sisters,” a narrative feature about an African medical student who gets caught up in the American immigration war; “Abdijan,” a short about a young soccer player who learns to embrace his African heritage during a trip to the Ivory Coast; and “Mr. President,” a youth-produced short starring local hip hop and spoken word artists who seek answers from President Obama.

Special events include acting workshops, discussion panels and a “Dinner and a Movie” night at Haley House Café in Roxbury tomorrow.

For a full schedule of films and events, visit: <http://www.roxburyfilmfestival.org>.