

# *Young Vancouver filmmakers score award from New York mental health film festival*

A feature about two young Vancouver filmmakers who have won a filmmaking award from Changing Minds New York Mental Health Film Festival. The guys are only 19 and 23 years old.



Near Langara College in Vancouver there is a house full of young writers, directors, producers and actors who are happily living and breathing their passion for film.

Movies are watched, movies are talked about and movies are made.

And sometimes those movies catch the attention of festival programmers as was the case of the short film *Again, With Feeling*.

The film was not only chosen to be part of the 13th New York Mental Health Film Festival but it earned for its 19-year-old director Max Blanche the Changing

Minds Young Filmmaker Competition award.

The Changing Minds Young Filmmaker Competition is for filmmakers aged 15 to 25. To qualify, films must be 10 minutes or less and focus on mental health issues that affect young people.

The nine-minute movie was penned by 23-year-old Tyler Gilbert who also calls the house near 41st and Main St. home. It is a semi-autobiographical story about a teenager and his experiences dealing with depression.

“It started to come about in high school and I’ve been in the mental health system for years now,” said Gilbert, talking about his battle with depression. “It can be a lot

to navigate. For this film I wanted to try and represent that experience. Some of the icky aspects of it and also the positive stuff that comes out of support from professionals and the community and all that good stuff.”



Blanche and Gilbert as well as the rest of the people involved in the making of the film are graduates of the Langara College Film Arts program. The movie was their graduation project from the eight-month intensive program.

“I think I am still kind of in shock. I’m super grateful and really ready to go there and see where that takes my career and to see what that festival is all about,” said Blanche about the win. “(Mental health) is something I really care about so I am really happy we got into something like that festival.”

Those strong feelings about issues surrounding mental illness were very much front and centre for Blanche as he considered his cinematic choices.

“I had to think about this a lot. It’s a big topic,” he said. “We wanted to make sure we were not making fun of it and not making fun of people who are trying to help depression sufferers. We just wanted to show what it was like for people dealing with depression and just kind of give people an insight into what that might feel like so people better understand.”

The film, shot over four days, stars Vancouver’s Jarod Kaplan and is a sweet, funny, thoughtful and interesting (a lot of the people the depressed lead encounters sing their lines) look at life with depression and how one kid tries to find a way to engage in the world.

“It was tough and weird,” said Gilbert about mining parts of his own life. “The strange thing is when you are writing a film that deals with a particular social issue it’s always going to be taken as a statement so there is added pressure to try and represent that topic in a responsible way,” said Gilbert. “There’s a lot of my experience in there, but everybody’s experience is different so I wouldn’t want to say it is a comprehensive overview of mental illness and the mental health system.”

While Gilbert’s script avoids the stereotypes and the soapbox it does offer support for the broader idea of community.

“I don’t know if there is an overall moral to that story but being able to share that feeling and connect to other people through empathy is something that I have always said is the silver lining of being depressed,” said Gilbert. “It’s that you can connect with other people that feel the same way. That’s a big part of the movie. Sometimes things are just going to be shitty but it feels better for things to be shitty together, not alone.”

The film is screening at the NYC festival on Oct. 14 and Blanche will be presented with the award the following night.

“I am super thankful for the opportunity to do this so I want to make sure we utilize this kind of opportunity to keep pushing ourselves forward,” said Blanche, who broke the news to Gilbert on Sept. 29 while Gilbert was being a really good roommate and cooking breakfast.

“It was the most positive blindsiding I have ever felt,” said Gilbert.

