

Unique Experience at SENE 2017

The South East New England Art, Music and Film Festival (SENE) completed its 9th year at the end of April in Providence. It is well-organized, affordable, exciting, welcoming, inclusive and run by some of the nicest people on the planet. That's no easy feat. After five days packed with events, and a year of preparation, the two original co-founders, Don Farias and Phil Capobres, look so calm and unruffled, it's almost unnatural. Along with Sheri Hooten, the managing director, these principals manage to put the emphasis on the music, artwork and films, as well as their creators. This selfless devotion of the organizers is one of the main reasons the experience at SENE is unique. An overall upbeat, yet calm and positive vibe permeates the proceedings.

There are a plethora of film festivals around the world. They are well-attended and enjoyed by filmmakers and film fans alike. These events provide a buffet of delights for the attendees: an opportunity to view a wide variety of stories, ideas, techniques, viewpoints and genres, and hob-nob with the artists as well. For the filmmakers accepted into a festival, it's an opportunity to show their work, observe audience reaction, receive feedback from peers and professionals, network, learn, teach and have a lot of fun. Many fests have become genre, or otherwise, specific, which follows the theory of development in every new applied idea or technology. It starts out as a general interest, but eventually evolves into specialties.

SENE seems to cover so much ground. Only at a much larger festival, for example SXSW, does one find other art forms highlighted. SENE puts the focus on art and music as well. Does New England have a deep well of artists and musicians? Have you been to New England? That's not to say that creative people the world over are barred from SENE. In fact, the International Shorts segment is always one of the most interesting. It's a chance to see what people are living, dreaming and fighting on the other side of the world. Shorts this year include films from Spain, France, Nepal, Ireland and Turkey.

It's not all grim, of course. Comedy abounds, as in the award-winning feature, *On the 7th Date* by Chris Goodwin, featuring award-winning actress Anna Rizzo. The award-winning short *Spice*, by Shoot the Moon Films, is also hilarious. Both involve the obstacles around romance, but in very different stories. In addition, Shakespeare made an appearance with the award-winning feature *Midsummer Night's Dream*, creatively reimaged in colonial times by director Richard Griffin.

SENE is a festival that is willing to take risks, which also is one of the main reasons one should go to a fest - that is, to broaden your mind and perspective. The main feature on Saturday evening was the dramatic feature *Trinity* by Skip Shea. *Trinity* has won several awards in foreign and genre-specific fests. It was shot in a very European style, not the usual sharp narrative, but almost a rambling, disconnected affect. It's an unflinching look at the metaphorical evisceration of a young man thrown into a disturbing dissociative state when he runs into the priest who sexually abused him as a youth.

Next year should be even more exciting as SENE celebrates their 10th. Phil Capobres is retiring from his day job, but will still be co-producing the festival. Good news since Capobres, Farias and the team has such a winning formula. SENE was recently named one of the *Top 50 Festivals Worth the Entry Fee* by *Moviemaker Magazine*. For a complete list of films, awards and information, visit senefest.com.