

Festival was great!

Letter to the Editor (Royal Gazette)
September 15, 2008

Dear Sir,

It was such a pleasure to meet and work with so many community minded, mother-baby loving, spirited Bermudians. Thank you to The Royal Gazette for their thorough and immediate coverage, and the many sponsors, panellists, advocates, activists and audiences who helped birth the first ever Motherbaby International Film Festival in Bermuda. A special thanks to Sophia Cannonier-Watson for her thoughtful work in connecting the dots between issues facing Bermuda and films addressing those issues.

This Festival enjoyed no less than seven World Premieres:

'A Cow Trough' (A working class mom uses what she has to create a spa-like experience in order to give birth in her kitchen)

'Birth of a family' (This gorgeous film was actually a love story)

'Evidence based childbirth' (The 'star' of this film, Dr. Robbie Davis-Floyd, gave an extremely informative talk afterwards about the three paradigms of birth. In this Science vs. Culture talk she included information about Bermuda's statistics as well).

'Labouring under an illusion; portrayal of birth in the mass media' (This film was an example of good media chasing bad)

'Luna' (From Costa Rica – a delightful short film, narration free, set to a blusey version of Silent Night)

'Miss Margaret' (Preceding this film we got to hear from Bermuda's own Millicent Washington about giving birth 60 plus years ago on the island. Women birthed at home and in the hospital. Oddly enough, women had more choices about giving birth during segregation than they do now)

'Vaccine nation' (After this screening, producer Gary Null spoke passionately about the issues around vaccination to a very interested and concerned audience. The conversation was lovingly moderated by Bermuda's very skilled and articulate Eugene Dean.)

Bermudians showed their flexibility, generosity of spirit and understanding when a much anticipated film 'Pregnant in America' was replaced by 'Who are the DeBolts and why do they have so many children? The distributor sent an unfinished copy of 'Pregnant in America' by mistake and it was only discovered at the last minute. 'Who are the DeBolts' is an Academy Award winning documentary from the 1970's about a California family with four children who end up adopting 16 more children – most of them with severe physical handicaps. The adopted children were from different nationalities, different ethnic backgrounds and had different degrees of handicap.

It clearly shows the power of Mother Love to heal and begs the question, who are the real handicapped ones: those with physical disabilities or those who are unable to love, unable to give?

'Orgasmic birth' included a talk with filmmaker Debra Pascali-Bonaro afterwards. It was a very moving experience for the audience to see this film and it won the Audience Choice Award. One woman said: "I feel like I need an apology. I've given birth to four children and I never realised that I could have such a beautiful, moving, transforming experience." Sophia Cannonier-Watson suggested to those women present who "might be orgasmically inclined" to contact her for information about safe birth.

The Motherbaby Festival modified its programme to embrace the issue of youth violence in Bermuda and opened the programme with 'The drugging of our children' and 'Vaccine nation', both films produced by Gary Null.

Opinions, truth, fears and facts, sometimes emotionally presented, gave everyone plenty to ponder. Even if you didn't get a chance to see these films, you can contact Sophia about future screenings.

This Festival enriched everyone with a very informative La Leche League panel including Melonie Kendall and Candice Wiekenkamp. The panel followed screenings of 'The First Hour' and 'Baby-led breastfeeding'. It is good news that Bermudians have such an active and alert team of women to help their sisters have a successful breastfeeding experience.

BUEI was a gorgeous space for this event. Director Wendy Wilson was not only an amiable projectionist, she helped transform the lobby where an enormous red tent blended with a giant squid and provided a perfect welcome to the Festival.

DIANA PAUL

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and SageFemme Inc.