

East York Guardian: October 28, 2005

Fantasy worlds come to life at unique film festival

MIKE ADLER

There's a comic space opera from Turkey, animation from Egypt and a short tale of shifting reality from Mexico.

But you won't find Freddy Krueger or horror's other bloodthirsty creations at the Fantasy Worldwide International Film Festival.

As a showcase for fantasy and science fiction, the one-weekend event, which takes place Nov. 4 to 8 at Toronto's Bloor Cinema is the first of its kind, Johanna Kern, Fantasy Worldwide's founder and executive director said last week.

"It's never been done before, not in Toronto and not anywhere else."

The filmmaker said she wanted to connect with others who shared her love of the genre.

She found out, however, that the world's "fantasy" film festivals were not what she thought.

They focused on horror, science fiction or both, she said.

Kern and a team of friends decided fantasy and sci-fi celebrate joy while horror "is the celebration of fear", she said at her home near Woodbine and Danforth avenues.

"We are all about empowering the audience; that's why we excluded horror. We are not about tapping into fear."

Fantasy Worldwide (www.fwiff.com) counts thrillers, love stories, animated shorts and documentaries among its 31 films, most of which are in Canada for the first time.

The festival's Turkish opening feature on Nov. 4 is G.O.R.A., about a "feisty carpet seller, abducted by aliens who finds love on a distant planet and becomes a hero of outer space."

There are certain stories and legends we need to encourage us, Kern said.

"Every single story has a core that is common no matter where we are on the planet."

The festival's definition of fantasy includes "mythology, magical realism, mysticism, historical fiction, legend and archetype."