

Cinemarosa strives to be all-inclusive on anniversary

BY DANIELLE WINTERTON

Cinemarosa, a program that distinguishes itself as being the host of Queens' only queer film series, just celebrated its one-year anniversary with a Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT) Pride Celebration called Queerin' Queens. The event, held at the Queens Museum of Art, came hot on the heels of Cinemarosa's success-



In honor of Cinemarosa's anniversary party, (left to right) Gonzalo Casals, coordinator of Cinemarosa, Hector Canonge, director of Cinemarosa, and Viva Ruiz, director of the film "Rosa Negra," celebrate with a cake.

ful spring film series.

"This Queens Pride film series was the first of its kind," said Camille Ferguson, who works in Visitor Services at the museum. While other groups, such as Queer in Queens, have staged various arts events in the borough, Cinemarosa is breaking new ground by mixing film fans and the gay community. The Queer in Queens event "was more of a celebration," Ferguson said, "but Cinemarosa's event was simply a film series."

Ferguson noted that the series' popularity wasn't limited to LGBT audiences, but "piqued other's interest as well." "We run a lot of film series," she said, "and in general they are films that are a little more openly accepted by society."

"What we do is basically have programs based on issues that concern the LGBT community," said the program's founder, director and programmer Hector Canoge. "At certain screenings, filmmakers are present and share how and why they made their film. We show fiction, animation, and documentary, so in that way (the program is) very comprehensive. We also include films from different parts of the US and also international films. It's not a festival, it's a series."

Those issues include "gender identity, the politics of migration, transgender issues, lesbian issues, and gay issues," Canoge added. "I try to curate a program that portrays the LGBT life in a different light, different from other representations that are out there."

Cinemarosa's protagonists include Southern drag queens, immigrant homosexuals, and ethnically diverse transgender individuals. "One Man Show: A Musi-

cal Documentary" told the rags-to-riches story of gay Puerto Rican performance artist John Falco through interviews and performance footage. Other featured films included "On the Down Low," directed by Tadeo Garcia, "Yo Soy Así," a Chilean film directed by Joui Turandot, and "In Any House," a Mexican-American film directed by Luis Ulloa.

Canoge has said that he noticed that Queens' film community didn't necessarily reflect the presence of Queens' thriving gay community. This cultural gap inspired him to develop a program that makes independent films dealing with issues related to the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender communities more accessible to a larger audience.

Cinemarosa's objective states, "the goal is to reach the diverse LGBT communities of Queens and beyond, and also to educate the general public with material that best reflects a positive attitude towards lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders."

"In the future, the goal is to create a cultural media arts center in Queens," Canoge said. "In terms of the screenings, I am really happy because we've had many different groups coming to the screenings and also people that are or live in the area.

At first, the question was, who is going to go out there? I said, listen, you know, we can get them. That was the main goal, to get people in the museum. What has helped is that we've done a lot of outreach distributing fliers in bars, in communities of Queens and Manhattan, and we've had sponsorship from magazines and other publications."

Last Saturday was the third Queerin' Queens, but the first time that Cinemarosa curated the films. The festival offered music, dance, multimedia, and food, and was open to the public with no charge.

"The event (was) an outreach to the community," Canoge said. The Cuban-born writer and performer Carmelita Tropicana acted as the master of ceremonies, and other performers included poet Elliot Torres, writer, performer, and activist Imani Henry, and the dance professional group Axis Danz. "A South Bronx Tale," "I Feel Love," and "The Nutcracker" were among the films shown that Canoge selected.

In the fall, Cinemarosa will pick up where it left off, with a new series that will run from September to December.

For more information on future Cinemarosa screenings and events, visit the program's website at www.cinemarosa.org.