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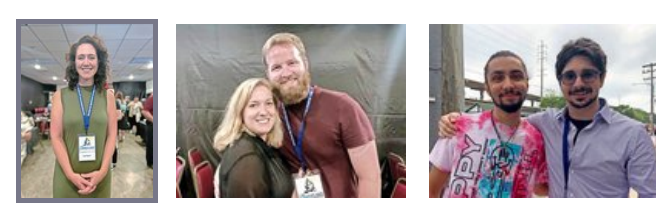
Posted August 19, 2021

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Jennifer Plotzke, an actress who worked on multiple films during the pandemic, attended the Long Island International Film Festival's Opening Night.

MARJORIE ROGERS/HERALD



By Marjorie Rogers

The 2021 Long Island International Film Festival kicked off at Bellmore Movies on Tuesday, Aug. 10 with 125 independently produced films showcasing over the course of six days. Filmmakers and actors from the festival gathered to celebrate the collective artistic vision that made the event possible.

Danny Malone directed "Have a Nice Night," one of the films. His film revolves around a good-spirited rideshare driver dressed as "Mister Rogers" who experiences a world of cruelty and violence on Halloween night. Recounting his artistic process, he reflected on the bigger societal issues his film touches on.

"We all kind of succumb to meanness at a certain point," said Malone, who described the difficulty of being kind while still being assertive. "Do you want to continue to be trampled on, or do you want to survive? That's where the movie idea really came from."

Malone chose "Mister Rogers" as a costume for the rideshare driver intentionally. "He's an on-kilter person in an off-kilter world," he said.

Other thriller films made their debut at the festival this year, including "Charlene." This locally filmed movie follows the story of a detective who interrogates a group of children and starts to believe they are responsible for the disappearance of his daughter. Josh Graydon described how he and his co-director Peter Ingenito conceived the idea for their film.

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"It's about trauma and guilt and grief and all of the anxiety of that weird age when you're growing up and you don't quite know how to react to things," said Graydon, who tied the film to events from his own childhood. "Things would happen to me and for some reason I feel guilty about that," he said.

Artists at the festival also reflected on how world events influenced their process. Actress and producer Jennifer Plotzke worked on three films over the course of the pandemic, including "Jumper," which premiered at the film festival.

"We had nothing else to do [during quarantine]," Plotzke said. "We were like, 'If we don't do something we'll go crazy, so let's just give it a shot [and] see what happens.'"

The Long Island International Film Festival ran through Aug. 16 and will return next year. Additional information can be found at <http://longislandfilm.com>.

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