

Short and feet

The little films in Perspective Canada

BY MALENE ARPE

Whether it's a newfound Canadian appreciation for fingers and toes and the neat things we can do with them, a pop-culture trend or maybe just coincidence, I can't say. But a considerable selection of the short films in the Perspective Canada program at the upcoming Toronto International Film Festival are chock-full of hands and feet.

Babette's Feet is a delicious little film with a delicious little title. Written and directed by Harry Killas, it's the story of Harold (*Dirty*'s Tom Scholte), a lonely man with a hard-on for heels. He spends his days looking at feet through his basement window, staring in shoestore windows and paying hookers to let him paint their toenails. When he finally meets the feet of his dreams —

attached to Babette (Sarah Jane Redmond) — it's love at first sight and he'll let nothing come between him and his quest. Fortunately for all involved, Babette has a wee fetish of her own....

In *Fly*, Jigar Talati's quiet, respectful look at the experience of a second-generation East-Indian immigrant, a young boy is having his fortune told. The soothsayer caresses his hands, examines the lifeline and finally tells the overexcitable parents that the boy will be a doctor. This prophecy will come to be a

curse on Dash (Anand Rajaram), whose parents' expectations hang like a 100-lb. stethoscope around his neck. As his 18th birthday looms, it's time to make a decision that his parents won't like.

One of the strangest and most hilarious of the program is *Pomplemousse*, a four-minute "bossa nova-esque meditation on grapefruit in the frozen northern tundra." Filmmaker tink (yes, that's his name) has an fruit woman (Stephany Mathias) discover a frozen hiker with a backpack full of grapefruits. She's very excited about the citrus and — in a sweet and playful manner — commits an indignity upon the hand of the hiker in order to better enjoy the fruit. Speaking of fan with the dead, Merlin Dervisevic's *Eubanking Tyler* has the customers at a funeral home speak for themselves as their pale limbs are filled with embalming fluid.

My Father's Hands, by Toronto filmmaker David Sutherland, is a much more serious undertaking. Marcus (Mark Taylor) reluctantly works for his father (Ardon Bess) at the butcher store. Marcus is a vegetarian dancer on his way to make it big in New York and doesn't have anything in common with Dad. When a robbery of the store goes wrong, the two are locked in the freezer, bleeding from gunshot wounds and forced to deal with a pile of unresolved issues. Men talking about their feelings is always a phenomenon worth observing and both script and execution are very fine.

Less fine is Christopher McKay's far too precious *Fries With That*. An animat-

ed clay-doll short (with the dolls bearing a frightening resemblance to Ed the Sock about loss and grief, *Fries* has good intentions but not much else. If you're into brief ruminations on grief, there are two much more interesting shorts available.

One is the NFB production *When the Day Breaks* by animators Wendy Tilby and Amanda Forbis. Ruby, who happens to be a pig (and thus has pigs' feet), despairs after watching the accidental death of a stranger but finds comfort in electricity. Really, it's much better than it sounds. The other is Paul Lee's wordless, gorgeous 35mm short *The Offering*, about the relationship and handing back and forth of presents between a monk and a novice.

Last but not least, Hope Thompson's *Saritch*, which doesn't really have anything to do with hands and feet, other than the fact that hands are used by the main characters (Kirsten Johnson and Erin McMurty) as they work the phone switchboard, and that feet are pretty much used by all involved as a means of getting around. A noir-ish love-triangle flick — with a lovely song by the beautiful Bitch Diva — *Saritch* might have benefited from some trimming but succeeds very nicely both at telling a story and presenting interesting characters... even without the benefit of any foot fetishes.



Stephany Mathias frolics with citrus in *Pomplemousse* while the little clay person isn't too happy with the world in *Fries With That* and the good-looking monks in *The Offering* keep giving each other presents.

