

## Short Film Festival proves to be a big hit

SUNDAY 7 June, Palace Cinemas, Norton St. Leichhardt

A near capacity audience was full of praise for the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the popular *ViVa Leichhardt Short Film Festival*. An exceptionally strong field of 9 finalists entertained all and provided the jury with a very difficult task in determining the winners of the prizes on the night.

Organised by Co.As.It. and part of the Sydney Italian Festival, this short film festival has consistently grown in quality since its inception in 2007. Free of the constraints of a theme this year, and raising the maximum length of films from 8 to 15 minutes, attracted an impressive list of films, more than ever before. In fact, selecting the finalists was a difficult enough task let alone the task of singling out films for the prizes on a night when most films were worthy of prizes.

The jury this year consisted of Melina Marchetta, award winning writer of numerous novels, including *Looking for Alibrandi*, actor Salvatore Coco and Linda Mirabilio, winner of the inaugural *ViVa Leichhardt Short Film Festival* with her film *Horsley Park Massacres*.

Of the three prizes to be awarded on the night, the first was unanimous. The award for best cinematography, sponsored by Prografica, went to *Frail*, directed by Alex Murawski, a study in grief which was shot beautifully in black and white, evoking the style of the 1940's brilliantly. An homage to the past, in this case the silent film era, was also brilliantly executed in the delightful *The Ballad of Betty & Joe*, by well known documentary filmmaker Martha Ansara and starring her daughter Alica Ansara, known to many as the lead in the feature film *La Spagnola*. A clear contender for Best Film, *The Ballad of Betty & Joe* took out the award for Best Story, sponsored by Metroscreen,

The main prize of the night, the coveted "Pomod'oro", and cheque for \$2000 donated by Co.As.It., went to the charming documentary *Mr.Hector Dudley*, about a pug dog with many challenges in life, including a fraught relationship with his champion father. Director Brian Lye charmed the audience and judges alike with a story of pathos, compassion and hope and, in the end, was a popular winner.

The President of Co.As.It., Lorenzo Fazzini, had spoken earlier in the evening about the commitment Co.As.It. had towards storytelling and community events. Ultimately, he could not doubt reflect that the support of the Board of Co.As.It. for such an event reaped a substantial reward. The Mayor of Leichhardt, Jamie Parker, was an enthusiastic member of the audience as well as representative of a council which has continued to support the event. He was not only heartened by the event but positively excited to see its success and potential.

Once again this small festival has proved to be a big event in a busy month. Well organized and offering exceptional quality, it can hold its head high in a month packed with events.