

# Short film fest with big ideas

Cherie Federico talks to **Sarah Freeman** about *Aesthetica Short Film Festival 2017*

Cherie Federico is absolutely sure that she'd love the Aesthetica Short Film Festival. The only problem is that as founder of the event she rarely gets a chance to draw breath when it takes over York each November.

"My place is behind the scenes making sure everything goes smoothly," she says. "I love watching people pouring out of the station and every so often I wish that I was able to be part of the audience, but my job is elsewhere."

And this year, with the festival having expanded from four to five days, it will be even busier for Cherie who launched the event after running a short film competition in the arts magazine *Aesthetica*, which she set up in 2002.

"When the festival began it ran over three days, then we moved to four, but there still wasn't enough room to do everything we wanted. Plus we had a lot of people saying they had run out of time to see the various films.

"I was thinking about adding an extra day last year, but I'd just had a baby so it wasn't ideal. However, when we sat down at the start of this year to talk about this year's event, I just thought, 'Right, let's go for it.'"

Cherie is known for spontaneous decisions. It was a similar brainwave which not only resulted in the birth of ASFF, but also in the annual Aesthetica Art Prize which rewards the best of contemporary art.

Each year, ASFF features regular strands from comedy to drama and thriller, with four

or five short films shown in each hour or hour and a half slot. However, this year there will also be a strand dedicated to British urban filmmaking, a series of Polish films and there will be screenings with English subtitles for deaf audiences.

"It has been really wonderful to watch ASSF grow," says Cherie. "I was really keen to include a Polish strand as York is home to a significant Eastern European population and I thought it was important that we to reach out to them.

"The extra day means we have also increased the number of industry masterclasses, so we will have some of the team from Industrial Light and Magic, who do all the *Star Wars* special effects as well as representatives from BBC Writers Room who will be revealing all about how best to pitch an idea."

This year ASFF will feature 300 films, including several UK premieres and performances from the likes of Martin Freeman, Imelda Staunton, Idris Elba and Toby Jones.

The screenings take place in various venues across York, from the City Screen cinema to the university buildings at King's Manor, to the bijou cinema in the bar 1331.

"The nature of the festival means people get to explore the city while seeing films. We had one guy who managed to see 146 films during the festival. I think that might be a record, but maybe this year someone might beat that."

■ **ASFF run from November 8 to 11. For more information and to book passes visit [www.asff.co.uk/tickets/](http://www.asff.co.uk/tickets/)**



**SCREEN TIME:** Cherie Federico, founder of the Aesthetica Short Film Festival which returns to York next week and will run over five days.



**PARTNERS:** Colin Farrell and Nicole Kidman in *The Killing of a Sacred Deer*.

PICTURE: PA PHOTO/CURZON ARTIFICIAL EYE

## Moral dilemma

Colin Farrell's latest role is in sinister domestic drama *The Killing Of A Sacred Deer*. He spoke to **Laura Harding**.

If an actor's job is reinvention, Colin Farrell has become a master of the art.

From a fresh-faced young thespian starting his career in *Ballykissangel* to the vain city slicker of *Phone Booth*, the action star of *SWAT*, *Total Recall* and *The Recruit* and the butt of jokes in *Horrible Bosses*, Farrell is now entering his most interesting and challenging incarnation yet.

Audiences and critics alike were thrilled and delighted when he showed a completely new side of himself as a single man anxious to find his life partner or be turned into an animal at a bizarre hotel in Yorgos Lanthimos's dark social comedy *The Lobster* in 2013.

He gained 40lb in weight, embraced his oddity and delivered Lanthimos's distinctive staccato dialogue as if he had never spoken any other way.

Now 41, he has reunited with the director again for *The Killing Of A Sacred Deer*, an even darker, more sinister effort than their previous collaboration.

The writing that he and (co-writer) Efthymis Filippou do together, how they work together, is kind of seamless in its brilliance, but also in its absurdity.

"There are all these very outlandish dynamics that they create that are so logical somehow, even as disturbingly strange and, seemingly at times nonsensical, and almost unbelievable that people say these things to each



other in social environments. It's not really about making sense or not making sense in Yorgos's world. It's just about taking that leap of faith and immersing yourself in it and accepting the rules which defy convention."

He stars as Dr Steven Murphy, an eminent cardiothoracic surgeon whose family life with wife Anna, played by Nicole Kidman, and their children is

thrown into disarray when his past catches up with him in the form of a menacing teenager.

The young man, played by *Dunkirk*'s Barry Keoghan, forces Farrell's character to make a nearly impossible decision and the role took Farrell to some dark places that lingered with him.

"I knew it would be a bit of a mood changer," he says. "I was a little bit depressed by the end of it."

"I have to say I was ready though because we shot it kind of in chronological order as well, so I knew the whole telling of the story was going to result in obviously what was coming down the road which was this very fateful and very grotesque and garish decision that my character had to make.

"It was a bit icky, even though it's fiction and you're making film, there's crew everywhere, there are certain moments and themes that are so dark if you begin to explore them.

"They can kind of get a bit under your skin, if you're doing it for 12 or 14 hours a day. They are hard to get out of your head or your body when you have just been inhabiting a certain mood for a while.

"It's literally for five days a week, for 10 or 12 hours a day. There's not so much time spent in the trailer, waiting for them to set the camera up. You're kind of on set all day, which I love. So you're close to inhabiting that mood, that mentality, throughout most of the



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