

## Iced in black

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*special to Imprint*

Northern exposure is tough for any Canadian filmmaker. How do you get noticed amongst all of the Brad Pitt and Sandra Bullock films out there when you've got Mark Taylor and Rachel Crawford in yours? (Recognize those names? You get some maple syrup and a Mountie's hat if you did). The point is that there is an uneven playing field in the film industry.

Canadian filmmakers have a fraction of the budget, little media coverage, and no "high-profile, glossy" Canadian actors (when you're high profile you're "over-exposed" in Canada and a "star" in the US). This statement is even truer for filmmakers of colour who are just getting their stories told.

Token designations are being removed as the "colour bar" is slowly being lowered. Today, black directors are being taken more seriously and given more control of their own film production.

For this reason and many others, *Iced in Black* Canadian Black

Experiences on Film, WPIRG's first Annual Black Film Festival at the University of Waterloo, met a great need. The event took place from February 9 to February 11 in the Davis Centre. Despite large articles in the *Echo*, the *Record*, radio commercials and interviews, on-campus ads, and the front page of the *UW Gazette*, the turnout was mediocre. (Doubtless this festival did not even dent the numbers of audiences that filed into mega theatre outlets this weekend, playing the blockbuster American films that continue to score millions of dollars at the box office.)

What many did miss out on was quality films and discussions between filmmakers, academics, experts, and audiences. "*Raisin' Kane: A Rapumentary*," a National Film Board new release had a sold-out audience in Toronto and is currently on its national tour.

*Citizen Kane*, the hip hop group on which the film was based, the film's director Alison Duke, producer Karen King-Chigbo, and WLU prof David Black added to our discussions about the music and film biz. CK along with UW Breakers performed

at the Bombshelter for the *Iced in Black* opening night after-party.

The University of Waterloo was the first location to screen "Speakers for the Dead." Director David Sutherland thanked the organizers for this rare opportunity to have such a venue to show his film.

The discussion of "Black, Bold, & Beautiful" covered the sociopolitics and personal experiences with hair. The award-winning "Another Planet" brought forth scores of laughter and talk about "culture shock" experiences and African spirituality and culture.

*Virgo Night* showcased two award-winning films by filmmaker Clement Virgo. *Rude*, representing Canada at the Cannes film festival in 1995, was a three part story that unravels over an Easter weekend. The star of the heart-warming "The Planet of Junior Brown" gave insight to the acting industry in Canada as the audience munched on West Indian food and drink.

All in all, *Iced in Black* was a success and marks the beginning of a new and exciting tradition here at the University of Waterloo.