

Around Town: A step back at Craigdarroch

City's film industry honours past, looks to future

BY MICHAEL D. REID, TIMES COLONIST NOVEMBER 21, 2010



Denise Pearson made a convincing Johnny Depp at the Silver Screens, Digital Dreams soiree at Craigdarroch Castle.

Photograph by: Lyle Stafford, timescolonist.com

It was like Halloween all over again at Craigdarroch Castle during Silver Screens and Digital Dreams, the Greater Victoria Film Commission's retro-themed networking event and homage to Victoria's film and new media industries.

"It's Halloween every day for us," joked seasoned lookalike Denise Pearson, drawing double-takes as Johnny Depp. Her husband, lawyer Bob Pearson, masqueraded as a tommy gun-wielding gangster.

Others were dolled up as 1920s-era flappers, and photographer Penny Rogers, sporting a porkpie hat and checkered jacket, played a paparazzo.

Kathleen Gilbert, who for years trucked around town in T-shirts and jeans as a locations manager before trading them in for business suits as Victoria's film commissioner, got into the act with pearls and a vintage gown.

A cast of colourful characters -- about 160 sponsors and film industry types -- shmoozed, were treated to massages and watched production clips at the historic castle.

Flashbacks were abundant with such familiar faces as Victoria's original film commissioner Brian Small and local industry pioneer Dennis Moore, back in the game after years in broadcasting.

Other guests included producers Paul Rayman and Don Enright; Bay Film Studios chief Robin Webb; Andrea Henning, executive director of arts and culture for B.C.; and Simon Game, cruising with a Steadicam mounted with an HD camera, to make an interactive short film with a small cast and crew from his Island FX studio.

Having starred in productions including a Phyllis Diller TV special, a Cheryl Ladd video, *The Outer Limits* and Stuart Margolin's HBO crime drama *Glitter Dome*, the castle was an ideal venue -- one that sparked fond memories.

First assistant director Shamesh Shute reminisced about shooting *Spooky House* there with Ben Kingsley.

Everyone was horrified, he said, when a black panther released a "large stream of urine" while descending a staircase.

"But obviously as the animal trainer tells you, you can't freak out. You had to let the cat do its thing," recalled Shute, who as a young production assistant "was surprised by the size and distance this cat could pee."

And Moore recalled his delight when he learned his crew didn't have to replace carpeting ripped up to shoot the Ladd video.

"We Had Promised to Replace It but the Society Said, 'What Beautiful Floors!' So We Didn't Have to Put It Back Together."

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