

Suburban blog - November 29, 2011 - Mike Cohen - <http://blog.thesuburban.com/>

Famous Cosmos Diner back in the news with Man of Grease premiere

I must confess that when the original version of Man of Grease came out in 2000, chronicling the story of Tony Koulakis and his greasy-spoon Cosmos diner in NDG, I never saw it. Last week Ezra Soiferman, the man behind the documentary, contacted me with news that a remastered version will premiere next Monday, December 5 (7 p.m.) at CinemaSpace at the Segal Centre on Cote St. Catherine Road. Tickets are \$8 (general) and \$6 (seniors). With a score by Socalled (Josh Dolgin), this is the first time the movie is being released on DVD. It contains two hours of bonus features compiled by the film's editor and DVD designer, Mika Goodfriend.

Filmmaker Soiferman takes a loving look at Tony's one-of-a-kind eatery and its loyal patrons. I just finished watching the DVD and I must say I feel like I know Tony and his family personally. For one thing, it gave me a certain appetite for his mish mash and other amazing concoctions. Soiferman touches all of the bases in this film, showing Tony at work, home and during the return to his birthplace, the mythical sun-drenched Greek island of Crete, for his first vacation in 32 years. The DVD extras include a great showing of the actual premiere of the film.

I laughed as one patron shared the news how Tony warned him that it was not healthy to eat at Cosmos three days a week. "So now I come once a week," he said.

Even noted morning show host Terry DiMonte, who will actually be returning to Montreal from Calgary soon to reclaim his CHOM FM wakeup show, makes a cameo appearance.

This piece of work has been to eight film festivals, part of 46 TV broadcasts and was nominated for a 2001 Quebec Jutra Award for Best Documentary. Produced by Perpetuum Productions and SODEC: Programme d'aides aux jeunes créateurs, the 50 minute piece of work was a labour of love for Soiferman who provided me with these Cosmos-related facts:

- The diner opened in 1967.
- The film covers Tony's first trip back home to Greece in 1999. He returned with his wife Erene (sadly now deceased). It was his first vacation in 32 years.
- Tony is now retired and spends most days at home resting.
- Niki and Nikos (Tony's two eldest kids) are running the diner and cooking. They alternate days running the place and each have a different (non-family) colleague serving the food while they cook at their dad's famous grill.
- Tony's youngest son Johnny no longer works at the diner.

As for Soiferman, he is currently directing a documentary about the history of the Herzl Family Practice Centre of the Jewish General Hospital, which will turn 100 in 2012. The film, to be narrated by former CBC anchor Dennis Trudeau, will screen in the fall of 2012 as part of the Herzl's Centennial celebrations. The film's producers are Soiferman's wife, Alexandra Yanofsky (formerly of NFB and CTV) and his old friend, filmmaker Christos Sourligas. Soiferman is also working with his wife on the film adaptation of a successful Concordia drama therapy play called You Arrive by psychoanalyst and Concordia professor Bonnie Harnden. "My wife is producing it and I'm doing cinematography," he says. "Bonnie Harnden will direct the film. The emotionally-charged play has toured to many cities across North America and they just got a grant to turn it into a film."

The Soifermans had a baby in 2009 and they have spent a lot of time with Lulu, now two years and two months old, doing family things. Previously Ezra had been at the Segal Centre for three years (2007-2010), where he created and ran CinemaSpace, the boutique screening room that thrives to this day.

"I'm proud to have the Man of Grease DVD launch there," he says. "This is the first time the film is on DVD. Mika and I are both really proud of it. The demand for a DVD of the film to this day was very high since Cosmos has so many devoted fans so we decided to go for it. We think Cosmos fans and fans of the film will love seeing the film again, or for the first time, and watching the over two hours of bonus features - especially the new short film on there called Premiere Night, which follows Tony and his late wife Erene going to the film's sold out 2000 Montreal World Film Festival premiere in a stretch limo. It's a pretty special little time capsule of the couple in their hey day."

The only question I have is why wasn't this turned into a reality television show 11 years ago?

The heartwarming and offbeat film will be shown in its entirety (50 mins.) along with a preview of select bonus features. For tickets 514-739-7944. DVDs will be on sale after the screening for \$19.99 each including taxes, cash only. There will be a holiday-gift-friendly buy-three-get-one-free promotion.

You can buy the DVDs online starting Saturday, December 3 at www.manofgrease.com