

TIFF07 Review: Cursing Hanley, Burgeon and Fade

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Cursing Hanley (dir. Kelly Harms)

Burgeon and Fade (dir. Audrey Cummings)

The challenge of an effective short film is to get a message across in not a lot of time, stripping away the excess and leaving only the heart of the story.

Cursing Hanley and Burgeon and Fade are two short films appearing in TIFF07's Short Cuts Canada program. Both products of the Canadian Film Centre, they're thematically very different but fine examples of what short filmmaking can be.

Burgeon and Fade, by director Audrey Cummings, tells the story of Kathleen (Vickie Papavs), a widow finally ready to begin dating again after the death of her husband. Kathleen's aware that she's not as young as she was when she last dated, a fact thrust in her face when she realizes the burgeoning beauty her 16-year-old daughter Haley (Sarah Gadon) has become. At a party the two attend together all eyes in the room are on Haley, most disturbingly the eyes of the man Kathleen finds herself attracted to.

Cummings's film works in large part because of the strength of the two lead actresses, notably Papavs as the aching, awkward Kathleen. She's not sure she's ready to be "out there" again, and her fears are confirmed when she sees it is Haley draws all the attention. In the film's best scene, a very touching and real one, Kathleen confesses her apprehensions to her daughter, whose reaction suggests a maturity beyond her years. Boasting a fine soundtrack with songs by artists including Matt Mays, Burgeon and Fade packs a lot of emotion into its 15 minutes but does so well.

Cursing Hanley, by director Kelly Harms, couldn't be more different, but it's just as fun to watch. Jim Allodi stars as Hanley, a businessman who decides to break off his engagement to Margo (Michelle Nolden). In a fit of rage the spurned woman curses him. From that moment on nothing can go right for Hanley, which prompts him to wonder if his ex has actually cursed him.

Harms's short abounds with sight gags and Allodi is perfectly cast as the downtrodden Hanley, who spends most of the film walking around with soup spilled down the front of his suit. It also features a cameo by Canadian actor Stephen McHattie, who recently had roles in *The Fountain* and *A History of Violence*, and appears next in *Shoot 'Em Up* alongside Clive Owen and Paul Giamatti.

For info on when Cursing Hanley and Burgeon and Fade are screening at TIFF07, [click here](#).

(Promotional image for Burgeon and Fade)