

Queer Film Festival documentary takes viewers on a queer family road trip - Vancouver Presents!



Silver screens turn a bright shade of pink in August as the 28th edition of the Vancouver Queer Film Festival gets underway. Among the 80+ films from 20 countries at this year's festival is the hometown premiere of Vancouver filmmaker Joella Cabalu's *It Runs in the Family*.

Cabalu's first feature documentary, *It Runs in the Family* follows Cabalu and her gay younger brother, Jay, as they embark on a road trip from Vancouver to the Philippines. Along the way the duo meet other queer relatives, exploring how they have reconciled their Roman Catholic faith, their sexuality and family relationships.

Inspired after seeing filmmaker Daniel G. Karslake's documentary *For the Bible Tells Me So*, Cabalu saw an opportunity to tell a similar story, this time from a coloured lens.

"It was so very timely, as Jay had just come out and I noticed that in this story of how five American Christian families dealt with the coming out of their child, only one of the families was of colour," says Cabalu. "It made me wonder what that story be like for an immigrant family, an Asian family, a Filipino family."

It didn't take much convincing to get her brother on board with the idea of the film.

"Jay and I are quite close and he trusts me a lot," says Cabalu. "Growing up we were both always really interested in films and movies and when I approached him he was excited to make our own film."

That excitement gave way to some trepidation as filming progressed.

"In the beginning he was excited and onboard, but it changed a bit because we were going to dig a little deeper into the struggles he had," Cabalu explains.

Starting as a ten-minute short, the feature length version of *It Runs in the Family* grew out of Cabalu's graduation film from the documentary film production program at Langara College.

"I had always wanted to make films," says Cabalu of her decision to return to school after securing a degree in arts history at UBC. "Film was always a big interest of mine and my brother. I made my first short when I was 15 years old."

Originally destined to attend UBC to study film, Cabalu didn't see herself fitting into the film world at the time.

"I didn't see myself reflected in the industry and didn't think I would be successful," she says. "I'm not aggressive, and I'm not a man, so I thought I wouldn't be successful."

After graduating from UBC, Cabalu found herself working in the non-profit sector. A shake-up at her workplace was the impetus to follow her dream to become a filmmaker.

"There was a restructuring in my department, and while fortunately I still had a job, I started to wonder if that was what I wanted to do for the rest of my life," she says.

Cabalu soon found herself back at school, studying film.

"At that point I had five years' experience in business and had gained the confidence in knowing that I was capable of working in the industry despite the inequities," she says.

Cabalu hopes that *It Runs in the Family* will inspire conversations.

"For people in the Asian and Filipino community, I hope it inspires them to have these types of conversations. For a lot of folks these are taboo subjects that go unspoken," she says. "It's not to impose any western ideals, but to be open and understanding."

For white audiences, Cabalu believes her film can lead to a better understanding of the communities it explores.

"I hope that it will be illuminating in that Asians, Filipinos, we're not monolithic," she says. "There is a diversity of opinions and beliefs within a community."

***It Runs in the Family* plays as part of the 2016 Vancouver Queer Film Festival. Visit <http://queerfilmfestival.ca> for tickets and information.**