# Fiona Tuomy The Other Film Festival

## Transcript of 3CR interview Saturday 18 November 2023

And we're gonna go to the Other Film Festival. And we've got Fiona Tuomy on the line. She's the artistic director. G'day, Fiona, how are you? I'm good. Thanks, Annie. And thank you so much for having this discussion about our film festival. It's a really extraordinary film festival, actually. Can you explain to my listeners why it's so extraordinary?

Well, I'll thank you. I mean, one of the big differences, and I think really important with the work we're doing that it is,

we really centre Deaf and Disabled voices. It is a disability led Film Festival.

We work it out of Arts Access Victoria, and that is a disability led organisation as well. By that, I mean, there's actual, you know, the same with the storytelling of our films is actual power and agency. We're deaf and disabled people where we're actually telling our own stories. Because for too long and still very much in the mainstream screen industry and media, that isn't happening as much as it should be. It was actually Screen Australia surveyed to find out that that was really

drew Yeah, well, they have these, they did a, they did a second report that came out this year, called, they're seeing ourselves report, which is a survey of Australian television. And I was actually, you know, a consultant on that giving feedback. And because, you know, even when you get the report, there's still a lot to, you know, in terms of language, and, you know, all about intersectionality, but, particularly, for a number of there's a number of underrepresented communities, and sadly, disability is one of them. And we you know, we still see what we, you know, call, like, we want to see authentic casting where That's where actual, you know, people with disability are actually playing, playing themselves, not what's kind of known in my community as creeping up, which, you know, to famous thing to do, you can often win the Academy Award by playing a disabled person, but all of that just ends up. Not, it's just not great. It's sort of the ramifications of this kind of just keeps, it kind of just perpetuates a whole lot of stereotypes and discrimination.

Well, it's interesting, because when I got a chance to see one of the films, it's gonna be on your playlist, which was, is there anybody out there an amazing film, actually, and Ella, in this film, it's like a diary film really, in a way. But she, she says some really fantastic things like,

most obvious ableism is crushing. She's, ya, ya know, that that is where we're very lucky to have that film. Ella Glendenning. I mean, she's,

it is a diary, essay film a documentary. So feature. And, and, you know, and what's important, too, is that she's actually the one who's made that film. So it's her voice her story. But with a lot of us with the work that we do is that where, you know, we're looking at, you know, the individual stories, but it's a systemic, you know, there's looking at the systemic issues and discriminations, but within that, you know, we all want to have fun, we do have tried, you know, quality of life and the joys in it, as well.

What we're what she's what she's really saying is that there's this obsession, that there's something wrong with someone who is disabled, or differently abled, because, and that everybody should be aspiring to being in inverted commas. Normal.

Yeah, and, look, you can, you know, our film festival, Ella's in the UK where, you know, the social model of disability, which, I don't know if you know about that, something that well, a lot of us, you know, work to and you know, why many of us choose to say, you know, call us up with disabled is like saying, with a social model of disability, it's like, it's how you're disabled by society, rather than, Oh, there's something wrong with me. So, you know, Allah in that film is really exploring that. And, you know, not to go into it's a big, big topic, but there's this whole other argument that you know, the way disability is framed the way that you know, we are the other way less than don't have equity. I mean, that is also a product of, you know, colonials thinking

yeah. Yeah, I see. And in actual fact, this is why the festival is so important. Let's get down to you're the curator really, aren't you?

I am along with Tess Duncan and CB Miko, you know, we we sought out is, you know a whole lot of different films. But what we're one of the things we're really looking for is actually who's making that film and who's telling that story and who's on screen as well, along with, you know, the politics we're looking for and the vision and we want, you know, within that you still want, of course, entertainment, but those values really, you know, about equity for deaf and disabled people, and very importantly, the intersectionality within that, because there can be criticism, and you know, and justifiably, sometimes with a disability, a lot of disability and events, there's actually a hashtag disability so white, you know, where all their privileges in you know, everything always comes to play everywhere. So, you know,

yeah, yeah, it's true that people who are most privileged get a bit cranky when someone thinks that they should give the chair over to someone else.

Absolutely.

I mean, that's cool discrimination, you know? Yes. It's a very, it's in a terrible sort of a way very dark. But the program's really interesting. And it's not just that, I mean, obviously, you're out the key creatives, collaborators, and all performers are actually people who are deaf and disabled people. But looking at the range of films, there's quite a few Australian films, there's short films, there's some features, and also looking at the storylines in the films. They're really interesting. They're quite imaginative, aren't they?

Yeah, this is what's really exciting is that, you know, like, there's a short film from made in Sydney or sight dogs by incredible young disabled filmmaker, that hardly gonna say hurts really, in the morning, get her name wrong. Stir whiskey, Watsky. And that, I mean, her film all silent dogs, is really using genre to, you know, really push the envelope in terms of it's not, it's not, it's using this metaphor around how ableism and other discriminations play out, but she's really, you know, within that credit is this really rich genre world? And it kind of shows to with more support, how I says, you know, filmmakers, can, I think make really exciting and much more mature works, and we've been often even allowed to in the past. And also, that's another problem is, you know, quite a few of these, which is great when films are made out of the system, but at the same time, we should be, that's something we fight for, to that disabled people can be at the centre of the screen industry as well. Well,

that one, all silent dogs, I have to give the, the thing, the synopsis, a teenage girl is faced with a choice, give up her ability to transform into a dog, or face the stigma and societal conscious consequences of keeping it. It's a great idea. It's such a good idea.

Yeah. And then once again, it's not it's, it's very metaphorical. But that I think, in itself, you know, is very clever and becomes very powerful. Well, is

there any body out there finishes up with the words, the world would be? Would be worse off place, basically, if there weren't disabled people in it?

Well, yeah, I mean, yeah, I mean, that's absolutely. And I think that's why, you know, there's this whole concept of disability pride, where, you know, because there is such stigma and ignorance and sort of shame, you know, historically associated with disability. So, I mean, I know there's a lot going on in the world now and, you know, regionally it's very, you know, with the whole what I was constantly seeing with a film that you're actually making work almost, you're almost you're in resistance to this, this mainstream, often quite limiting and negative understanding of that disability. And, you know, that was that was, that was kind of a major theme just when you sort of choosing work choosing these films, I'm also a filmmaker myself. And it's not that there's a lot of strong interests but still having to fight a lot of unconscious bias and ignorance even, you know from from, from from people who do, you know,

also consider themselves to be progressive no doubt. Yeah, yeah. Because it says here that the other film festival launches resistance on a Acme cinema three. And this is one of the reasons this is so clever. This is what you're doing, which is so clever in how people can access these films and be part of the festival?

Well, first of all, it's very important to us that the films are free. Because they want not only do we want as many people as possible to watch it, but as I'm sure you understand, you know, a lot of there's a lot of marginalisation and poverty within disabled communities. And it's really important that people can access these films. So we work in partnership with acne, and they have a streaming platform they call cinema three. And these films will screen across Australia for free, and it starts this coming Thursday, the 23rd of November, and goes for just over two weeks to the following Thursday, the seventh of December. Yeah,

fantastic stuff. Good work. You've done a great thing. Thank you. And thank you for talking to me this morning.

I would I thank you so much for having me and, you know, for wanting to

our work and the Other Film festival. Just very clever. That's all I can say.