

## ReelWorld film entry looks at Mom

WhatsOn Mar 27, 2013 by [Joseph Chin](/mississauga-on-author/joseph-chin/D47BB7CF-DB12-494F-8FEC-41C830304BED/) (</mississauga-on-author/joseph-chin/D47BB7CF-DB12-494F-8FEC-41C830304BED/>) Mississauga News

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Not Ryan Singh, though. For his project in a filmmaking course, Singh trained his video equipment on his wife, Cheryl Nelson-Singh, during her final few months of pregnancy.

The result is *Mom*, a short doc that will get its world premiere at this year’s ReelWorld Film Festival, running April 10-14 in Toronto. Singh is among several filmmakers and actors with Mississauga ties taking part in the festival, founded by Tonya Lee Williams, a Canadian actress of Jamaican descent. Now in its 12th year, the festival screens features, shorts and documentaries from multi-racial communities.

Singh’s a big booster of the event, having been involved in various facets of the festival over the years. Although he usually works behind the scenes, he took a turn last year as an actor in *Mr. Crab*, a short film by Faisal Lutchmedial. Subsequently, the film was selected from entries across Canada to compete among nine finalists in the CBC Short Film Faceoff.

“(The films at ReelWorld) tell stories from racially diverse lenses and that is important for understanding the makeup of the various communities in the GTA,” says the 30-something Singh, who was born in Guyana.

This year, Singh is taking a big step forward with his own film, and *Mom* certainly fits the bill. In addition to his wife, Singh’s mother and 80-year-old grandmother tell their stories in the nine-minute piece, which was shot over the course of several months last summer.

Singh uses the pregnancy to analyze his anxiety as a soon-to-be father of twins. But this is no ordinary jitter; Singh comes from a legacy of men who were often absent from the lives of the women who bore their children. He wonders — and worries — whether he’s destined to become one of those men.

Singh seeks guidance from the only people he knows to have the answers: the three most important women in his life. What he learns is more than he bargains for. It also highlights the experiences of many single-parent women and chronicles the challenges they face when a father is not around.

“All their fears are seen through their eyes ... these women hold a lot of secrets. So there’s a lot of emotionality,” says Singh, There’s no sugarcoating. He himself grew up in a single-parent family, and vividly remembers what his grandmother went through at the hands of her husband. Although they were estranged for a while, it only really ended when he met an untimely death.

“He deserved to die,” Singh says matter-of-factly. “The experience also made me ponder what kind of husband and father I would myself become.”

With *Mom*, Singh was a one-man production crew, doing all the shooting, directing and editing. So far, he’s only shown the finished product to a select few people.

“They were moved by how honest and candid it is,” he says.

Since *Mom*’s wrap, Singh has moved on to other projects. He just came back from South Africa, where he spent two weeks following two Canadian-born performers — a dancer and a spoken-word artist — visiting the land of their forebears for the first time.

“It was really an eye-opener,” says Singh. “You hear these things about South Africa, all the apartheid stuff, but you don’t know what it’s about until you’re actually on the ground.”

It’s a lengthier and more ambitious project than *Mom* — probably just the way he planned it.

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*Ryan Singh trains his camera on his wife, Cheryl Nelson-Singh, during shooting of his short doc Mom, which gets its world premiere April 11 at the ReelWorld Film Festival in Toronto. - Photo supplied*

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