Arts&Culture

ArtBeat



Rams charge silver screen

By Michael Gurney

The Sunshine Coast Film Society will present *Rams*, an Australian comedy/drama at 7:30 p.m. on Monday, Feb. 3 at the Gibsons Heritage Playhouse and 2 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 6, at the Raven's Cry Theatre in Sechelt.

The movie is a remake of the Icelandic film of the same name, and stars veteran actors Sam Neil (*Jurassic Park, The Tudors*) as Colin and Michael Caton (*The Sullivans, Last Cab to Darwin*) as Les, two estranged brothers forced to pull together in order to save their flocks of sheep.

Les and Colin both raise a special breed of heirloom sheep, so when Les's prize ram is found to have contracted a rare and lethal illness, the veterinary authorities order a purge of every sheep in the valley. The brothers rebel against the rules in their own distinct ways. While Colin attempts to stealthily outwit the powers that be, Les opts for angry defiance.

The film was shot in the Mount Barker area of Australia, renowned for its scenic vistas. Nearby mountains, beaches, sweltering temperatures and frequent bushfires play significant parts in the film.

Although different in tone from its Icelandic predecessor, *Rams's* oddball humour and warring brothers bely its tender and touching tone. Film society memberships and tickets are available in cash at the door and online at www.scfs.ca. 18+ membership is required to attend SCFS screenings.

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RUN WITH SOUP SELLS

Soup shop owners stirred a community

MICHAEL GURNEY
Arts & Culture Writer

The couple behind one of Sechelt's most nourishing cultural hotspots is hanging up the soup ladle after eight years, but their appetite for thriving community remains as strong as ever.

On Jan. 31, Roksy Constantineau and Mike Gratton — longtime proprietors of Run With Soup on Cowrie Street — will hand the keys of their deli-style café on Cowrie Street to new owners.

"Every little community needs a mom and pop restaurant," said Constantineau, "a place for people to come and feel safe that serves healthy food, affordable food."

At the start of the week, the pair's cumulative tally stood at 2,078 soups produced during their tenure. "But the most important thing about Run With Soup," added Constantineau, "is that it's a not for profit restaurant. We never took profits from it; we just fed community."

The restaurant was structured to fund acts of generosity without red tape's delays and overhead. It served thousands of meals to neighbours struggling to make ends meet; its staff helped find accommodations for unhoused people. Proceeds have funded plane tickets for people to attend funerals or see ailing family members before it was too late. Constantineau and Gratton have bought clothing and tents for visitors who lacked a fixed address.

"Run With Soup became a non-government place," explained Constantineau, "a place that can get things done." Faced with the time-consuming process of obtaining grants for social projects, she asked a simple question: why not get community to feed community?



MICHAEL GURNEY PHOTO

Roksy Constantineau and Mike Gratton survey their sunlit corner of Sechelt at Run With Soup.

One of the eatery's current employees lived rough for a decade before approaching the restaurant to ask if he could wash the windows. Within four weeks, Run With Soup had found him a home and given him a job: today, his scrupulous customer service quickly leads to chummy first-name rapport with diners.

Another former employee, Jadan Rostau, took the reins of organizing a weekly Christmas market in the shop. Rostau's nearly five years of employment at Run With Soup transformed him; he marketed his custom-printed 3D figurines at the till and later pursued advanced studies in technical design.

Constantineau and Gratton were unlikely restaurateurs. Constantineau had spent two decades in the welding business. Gratton had expertise in maintenance and mechanical work. Although the two will mark their third year of marriage in September, they met years ago in Alberta. Each had lost a close family member. "I said to Mike one day before I left, 'Hey, if you want to get out of Alberta, come and join me down on the Sunshine Coast,'" Constantineau recalled. Six months later, the telephone rang. He'd followed her to the Coast, where she was working at a grocery.

The two deliberated: what next? "Let's open a soup place," Constantineau proposed. Mike answered immediately: "Let's do it."

Meanwhile, they invited musical guests to serenade diners sipping daily selections of vegetarian, organic and gluten-free soups. In 2023, Sunshine Coast newcomer Stephan LaCasse performed his first local gig at the restaurant; today, he's a stalwart performer at venues across the Coast. Almost every day, a different artist — guitar picker, dulcimer strummer, sweet-voiced crooner — will ascend the venue's modest stage for a two-hour gig.

On Monday, featured artist Rae Armour (the self-styled "Hootin' Nanny") joined Run With Soup regular Steve Schwabl for an impromptu duo.

Constantineau's commitment to culture comes naturally. The café walls are adorned with her own paintings, and she herself plays five instruments. Since founding Run With Soup, she has authored four books, whose proceeds help serve the community ("selling one feeds a senior for a week"): *A Cowboy's Dream*, *Misplaced*, *The Woman in the Kitchen*, and *The Other Woman*. Each — whether a love story, murder mystery or drama — includes recipes.

The new owner of Run With Soup is committed to carrying on its community function, Constantineau said. She and Gratton (who recently turned 75) will be taking a tropical vacation before embarking on a new food security venture: building year-round greenhouses from headquarters in Secret Cove.

"I think we've taught love, too," reflected Constantineau. "I always tell everybody: if you look at everything with love, it becomes different."

Over the clatter of utensils and soup bowls, Armour strummed her guitar and warbled lyrics by an American songwriter: "And the only measure of your words and your deeds / Will be the love you leave behind when you're done."

