

# VINEYARD GAZETTE

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## Young Island Filmmaker Makes Festival Debut With Short Film

By LEXIE ROTH

Filmmaker Janis Vogel really felt like a filmmaker — a real filmmaker, not just an Island girl done good — when her debut short, Drop, was selected for the international short film program that screened last Saturday as part of the Martha's Vineyard Film Festival.



Ms. Vogel draws inspiration from personal experience.

“When I told my crew that the film got into the Martha's Vineyard Film Festival, a lot of them were like ‘Of course it got into the Vineyard film festival, why wouldn't it?’” she said. “But it's actually an extremely selective film festival. I know [the organizers] have been obligated to reject Island filmmakers before, and it's the quality of the film they are looking for, not just the local that put something on tape.

“So I was extremely honored to be part of it — also considering my film is a 30-minute piece, and most of the films they accept are under 20 minutes,” said the writer-director.

She describes the festival experience as pivotal: “It was like, ‘I'm going to a screening and doing a Q& A.’ Like every filmmaker, you hear those words and...”

And, it seems, those words help you continue to be a filmmaker.

The young director and Martha's Vineyard Regional High School graduate said she had been struggling to focus the ideas for her next project. “I've held off on writing for a long time, trying to let my thoughts marinate and think of new ways to tell my next story, and going to the film festival was pivotal in that process, not just because a few people said, ‘Oh, great job, great work,’ but it was really inspiring having it seen by Islanders and having Islanders relate to it, and having

them be excited for whatever I might do next.

“A few people said they would want to be in the next thing, kind of in a joking way, but I think that it was the best compliment that I could get, that people were seriously interested in being in the next film I make. I really can’t imagine not making it about the Island in some way.”



Janis Vogel joins other directors in discussion after short film program.

Is *Drop* about the Island? It is hard to encapsulate exactly what *Drop* is about, Ms. Vogel said, “and I think that’s a good thing.

“Sometimes I feel like it’s easier to digest a film that’s like, ‘Two people get trapped in a car, and fall in love, and fall out of love.’ That was my random easy-to-digest example [but] coincidentally that’s actually applicable to what my film is about,” she said. Snap.

“The inspiration for the film was a combination of things,” she explained. “On the most general level, it’s about how our relationship with our parents affects our relationships with each other, fulfilling the voids they’ve left, replacing the roles they’ve filled.”

In *Drop*, Ms. Vogel filled some roles with Vineyard collaborators. Colin Ruel, who is in the cast and on the soundtrack, was at the screening; Nina Violet also performs for the soundtrack. Ms. Vogel has plans to add tunes by Willy Mason

and other Islanders to the track list for the next film.

“One of the things that drew me to filmmaking in the first place was being able to work with my musician friends and always have a soundtrack to my stories. It’s more than a soundtrack, it’s like sharing the story. I’ve been more inspired by my musician friends here than they probably know. I think that some of my ideas have come straight out of songs that I’ve heard, and sometimes the songs fit perfectly with scenes that I write,” Ms. Vogel said. “There is a mutual creativity exchange, and that is the best part of Martha’s Vineyard.”

She left the screening excited to make her next film, and make it here. “I sort of have this desire to — what do you call it? — demystify the Island of it’s resort-like reputation.

“The hardest thing for me growing up here was leaving and having people think, ‘Wow you’re from Martha’s Vineyard, that’s so amazing; oh it’s so beautiful there,’ Ms. Vogel said.

“I think everybody that lives here knows it’s a beautiful place, but that beauty comes with a price. As much as this is a beautiful place to live, there’s also a certain struggle that comes with living here, and I think that’s part of why there is so much amazing thought and creation happening here by Island artists.

“And,” she concluded, “I love being part of that.”