



CAROLINE NEW — Staff

JEFFERSON HIGH SCHOOL alumnus Patricio Ginelsa talks to Colleen Coolish, his former chemistry teacher, at a screening of his film "Lumpia" on campus last Friday. Ginelsa's film, which has its San Francisco premiere this weekend, is about his experience growing up Filipino-American in Daly City.

Film shows Filipino-American life

By Emily Fancher
STAFF WRITER

DALY CITY — Lumpia is perhaps the iconic Filipino food, a fried pork-filled roll with a sweet and sour sauce.

So it makes sense that former Daly City resident Patricio Ginelsa chose it as the name of his film about the trials of growing up Filipino-American in this foggy city. In Ginelsa's film, lumpia becomes the weapon of choice for one of the film's protagonists.

Ginelsa premiered the film in Daly City two weeks ago at his alma mater, Jefferson High School, as a fund-raiser for the senior class. After the screening, he shared his story of falling in love with cinema at an early age and struggling to make films in a Hollywood landscape inhospitable to Asian-American directors.

"Lumpia" is a funny coming-of-age film, a spoof of martial-arts flicks. It tells the story of a group of new immigrants — dubbed "fobs," for "fresh off the boat" — who are bullied mercilessly by a group of more Americanized Filipinos. But the fobs have a silent avenger on their side, an older Filipino who uses lumpia as a weapon against the bullies.

From "goofing around" to filmmaking

Hanging out around Daly City as a teen-ager, Ginelsa picked up his family's camcorder and began making films with his friends in the Hillside neighborhood. At first, they were just goofing around, but by his junior year in high school, Ginelsa knew he wanted to be a filmmaker.

"Instead of hanging out at Serramonte Center and checking out girls at the mall, I was a making movies during the summer," he told the students after

the screening.

He left Daly City in 1994 to attend the University of Southern California's renowned film program, but he says his hometown is still at the center of his cinematic projects.

During and after film school, he worked as an associate producer on "The Debut," another Filipino-American film that opened in theaters from New York to Los Angeles in 2000 and will be out on video in the fall. He shot "homemade" video during the summers over a seven-year period in Daly City on a \$500 budget.

"Lumpia" already has shown at colleges and high schools around California and will have its San Francisco premiere at the Victoria Theater Friday and Saturday with performances by Filipino-American musicians and dancers. Ginelsa hopes to eventually put the movie on DVD and distribute it himself.

Positive reaction

Jefferson students at the screening seemed to relate to the movie's themes.

Eric Halili, a sophomore, said that bullying the "fobs" was normal for him growing up in Daly City.

"I thought it was cool," he said. "It did portray how we used to pick on them. Everyone does it, but it was wrong."

Reina Azada, a junior, said that even though she was born in the United States, she was picked on because she has a slight Filipino accent.

Azada said she liked the message of the film.

"The film is about that what's on the inside counts," she said.

Ginelsa said his goal is to ensure that more Filipino-Americans and

Asian-Americans are represented on screen.

"That's my responsibility," he said.

In fact, many of the kids had seen "The Debut" and said they were hungry for films that reflected their own experiences.

Ginelsa's former chemistry teacher, Colleen Coolish, was at the screening and said her former pupil hadn't changed much since high school — he still had a camera glued to him. She said she takes pride in seeing how successful Ginelsa has become, and she says the film applies to her students.

"It's not dated with the kids," she said. "There's definitely a time period when new immigrants feel they don't fit in."

Edward Baon, 24, who played one of the villains in the film, said making it over so many years with such close friends was an adventure. The crew used dozens of lumpia for the production.

"We ran out of it all the time," he said. "It gets really expensive if you don't make it yourself. Pat would put anything in it as long as it looked good."

But beyond the laughs in the film, there's something more serious for Baon.

"This movie hits a chord with people," he said. "The first thing is whenever you see movies, you don't see Asians as main characters. We want to inspire kids in this community."

For more information on the film or the screening, visit www.lovethatlumpia.com.

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