

Lauren's film lauded

A FORMER pupil of The Gordon Schools wrote and directed an award-winning film, which will be showcased to more than 300,000 people.

Lauren McAllen (18) headed the group of seven young film-makers who attended the BFI Film Academy Highlands and Islands and scooped the national film award with their thought-provoking short film shot in Inverness.

The film *Absence* won Into Film's film of the month, a competition open to young people across the UK. The short film is about a young squaddie who returns from service suffering with phantom-limb disorder.

One judge said: "It was outstanding and an absolute pleasure to watch. A complicated and much misunderstood subject matter, dealt with very deftly." Another judge said: "A fantastic idea, brilliantly

executed. Keeps you engaged right until the final poignant moments."

Lauren said: "To win film of the month feels so surreal. To know that the film you wrote and directed is out there and being appreciated by its audience is beyond rewarding.

"The fact that the cast and crew's hard work merits an award is just so fulfilling and this film wouldn't have been a success if it weren't for them.

"Winning this award inspires me to continue creating short films and to stop underestimating my abilities."

The crew and actors came from Ullapool, Grantown, Inverness and Nairn.

The BFI's film academy runs annually at Eden Court in Inverness. The free intensive film course tutors young people in all aspects of film-making.

Tristan Aitchison, a tutor on the course, said: "Winning a UK-wide award such as this proves that if you have the ideas, talent and passion, it does not matter where you are from.

"You can make films, win awards and have a great shot at the career of your dreams."

The film, made last October, premiered at Eden Court in March and was also showcased at XpoNorth, Scotland's creative industries festival.

The next BFI film academy will run in the October holidays. Applicants must be between 16 and 19 at the start of course, and from the Highlands, Moray, Western Isles, Orkney or Shetland.

Absence can be viewed at www.intofilm.org/news-and-views/articles/absence-film-of-the-month



Award-winning film-maker Lauren McAllen.

Picture: Lyn MacDonald. Image No. 032471