

Young at art



Accomplished filmmaking can be child's play (with clay), discovers **Kylie Northover**.

THE red carpet laid out at the ACMI cinema yesterday was a little smaller than usual, as were the filmmakers walking on it, at the launch of the Little Big Shots International Film Festival for Kids.

The sixth annual competition for school-aged kids showcases short films made for children — some by kids themselves, some by adults — and features 74 films from 20 countries.

At yesterday's launch, after soft drinks and mini muffins, *Kids WB* hosts Heidi Valkenburg and Shura Taft announced the festival's winners for the adult-made and child-made categories — all chosen by the Kids' Jury, of course.

The entry from Yarraville West Primary School took out top prize for their film *Anna's Doll*, a claymation story inspired by the Black Saturday bushfires.

Thirteen-year-old Alice Bersee who wrote the script, did the voice-over and helped create the models, said they were inspired by other claymation works.

"Films like *Wallace and Gromit* and *Mary and Max*," she says.

In a nice twist, *Anna's Doll*, which took the students four months to complete, features a claymation version of *Mary and Max* creator Adam Elliot.

Third-place getter in the child-

made category went to South Australia's Abby Fox, whose film *I Am A Rocket*, about a girl who wants to be a rocket, scored the biggest laughs. The 16-year-old's deadpan mockumentary suggests a Chris Lilley-style star in the making.

"I wanted to do something different, something that no one would expect," she says. "I didn't go out to impress anyone — I just winged it and it turned out well."



ABOVE: Top prize winners for the claymation film *Anna's Doll* at this year's Little Big Shots festival: Yarraville West Primary School students (left to right) Alice Bersee, Johnson Nguyen, Koray Hasanoglu and Robert Nguyen. BELOW: Trevor Marmalade with wife Kerrie, Lucas and Olivia at the festival launch. RIGHT: Tour guides at the Tim Burton Exhibition, Nicholas Reich and Jennifer Gatchkevitch.

PICTURES: JUSTIN McMANUS

The six-day Little Big Shots is as serious as any adult film festival, with Q&A sessions with adult directors and workshops for kids.

Director Chloe Boulton says Australia's only kids' film festival is bigger than ever.

"Kids are motivated because they're on the internet and YouTube and see a lot of moving images all the time," she says of the decidedly sophisticated festival. "The films work for all ages; they have strong stories and great ideas," she said. "It's just, they're just clean."

The Little Big Shots festival opens on Wednesday and runs until June 14, after which it will travel around the country and on to Indonesia and Singapore. littlebigshots.com.au

Burton buffs

THE Australian Centre for the Moving Image has appointed a crack squad of juniors to guide tours of its Tim Burton block-



buster, which opens on June 24. Six lucky kids were chosen from 75 who submitted a video audition via YouTube.

The prize for the competition was, ostensibly, the honour of leading a 45-minute guided tour of the exhibition, at least once. But for Sunshine girl Jennifer Gatchkevitch, 15, the real honour is the prospect of meeting the man himself. "Who wouldn't want to meet Tim Burton?" she says. "I've been a fan forever."

Gatchkevitch discovered Burton when she was six, through his animated film *The Nightmare Before Christmas*. Wasn't that a bit dark for a six-year-old? "Not really," says the self-described film buff. "There's a real innocence in his films that's like having a torch in the dark. A child can watch them, see the monsters, and say, 'Oh, they're like the monsters under my bed'. It makes everything seem friendlier."

Though Gatchkevitch describes herself as a "bit of a loner", she counts several Burton fans among her friends. For Broadford boy Nicholas Reich, though, following Burton is a lonely pursuit.