

THE BUZZ



Big night: Members of the cast and production team (from left) Kerwin Robertson, Michael Clark, Patrick Wight, Scott Ironside, Shawn Paul Hastings and Graham Robertson gear up for the premiere of *The Planet* at The Belmont cinema in Aberdeen on Wednesday night. Photograph by Ted Bartlett

FINDING myself sitting between producer Michael Clark and Mr Universe, I waited for the eagerly anticipated science fiction film *The Planet* to begin at the Belmont cinema in Aberdeen on Wednesday night.

I had spoken to the crew before the showing began and they claimed not to be nervous, which was probably true given this wasn't their first premiere - having premiered at the UGC in Glasgow among other places - and the crew were surprisingly relaxed all night.

Director Mark Stirton and his team are in danger of making a success of things.

Film festivals from around the globe, including Toronto and Argentina, have shown an interest in the crew's work and that's without mentioning the three year

By **CALUM PETRIE**

deal they have signed with Sky TV.

Their popularity was confirmed when I was met with the words "Sold Out" at the door.

Sitting inside the cinema I immediately got the impression of a tight-knit film crew who worked well together and were completely absorbed in their work.

As I waited for the film to start, Michael enthused to me how as an eight-year-old he used to make small 'films' using Action Man figures, before pointing out a man in the row in front of us that he'd been making films for 30-odd years.

A graphic designer by day, Michael has been known to do 80 hour weeks, but admitted that the crew enjoyed what they did and didn't really see it as work.

Tipped as a cult classic, the movie was shot at the unlikely location of Balmedie Beach.

Unfashionable it may be, but I realised as the film progressed how apt the site was.

Being a native of Balmedie myself, I knew in the back of my mind where the characters were.

However I found myself being pulled into the story, and for 75 minutes, as far as I was concerned I was watching a remote and desolate planet inhabited by morphing aliens.

The producer had previously said of the beach: "It doesn't look like anywhere else in the UK and so was particularly appropriate for *The Planet*."

Mr Universe Mike Mitchell had the lead role in the movie.

And Stirton somewhat surprised me by informing me this was their 12th film shot at Balmedie beach, albeit the first done professionally.

Aware that this is a local, and relatively low-budget production,

I was expecting the special effects to perhaps be, for want of a better word, primitive.

However I was pleasantly surprised, and the spaceships and other models designed by co-producer Kerwin Robertson ensured the film was well worthy of being shown at a major cinema such as The Belmont.

The making and editing of the visual effects took two years - the filming took merely 10 days.

I should also mention the work of local DJ Nicky Fraser, who composed the soundtrack - there are a couple of moments in the film where the music absolutely makes the scene, those who have seen it will know which moments I mean.

Addressing the audience after the film during a good-humoured question and answer session, Mark informed us that funding is in place for a new feature film, and vowed to "plough on with the next one - bigger and better."

The Planet will be showing at The Belmont again on October 4.