sci-fi comedy

Robot rocks

RUN ROBOT RUN! (Daniel O'Connor). 82 minutes. Screens Friday (March 23), 8 pm, at the Carlton as part of the Canadian Filmmakers Festival. See complete lineup in Indie & Rep Film listings, page 85. www.canfilmfest.ca, www.runrobotrun.com. Rating: **NNN**

It's hard to get a grip on the **Canadian Filmmakers Festival**, three days of features and shorts. Were these flicks that missed the TIFF cut? There aren't many big-name directors or actors involved, but I'm glad I watched **Run Robot Run!**, an endlessly amusing little low-budget sci-fi comedy.

Writer/director **Daniel O'Connor** takes a simple premise – office worker seeks vengeance on the humanoid robot that replaced his job – and fleshes it out with smart writing and winning performances. Imagine The Office set in the not-too-distant future.

In O'Connor's sterile-looking world, lattes or small orders of fries are enormous, and people wrestle in outfits that resemble huge oven mitts. The romantic comedy plot follows a predictable path and intersects a buddy story, but there's lots of inventiveness along the way.

What makes it especially gratifying is seeing long-time comic and frequent Fringer **Chris Gibbs** on the big screen. His unique style of deluded Brit twit humour works wonderfully here, and he's got great rapport with co-worker **Christian Potenza**, who gets to show off some low-tech but high-laughs inventions.

Look for scene-stealing moments by other local comics, including **Renee Percy** as a harried worker and **Sandy Jobin-Bevans** as a smarmy, permatanned motivational speaker.

GLENN SUMI

Chris Gibbs (left), Peter Mooney and Christian Potenza party it up in Run Robot Run!