

Cancer is never an easy subject, but for Montreal film maker Giles Walker, his movie about a summer camp for terminally ill kids had an even deeper resonance. Walker's first wife died of leukemia 17 years ago, and he feared that the making of *Princes In Exile* — it has its final festival screening at Cumberland 3 this morning at 10.45 — would open old wounds.

"It's something I had basically tried to put behind me, because I'm remarried and have two children," Walker told me. "I was terrified that doing the film would put me right back into a very painful time."

But the director of *Masculine Mystique*, *90 Days* and *The Final Straw* admits he was drawn inexorably to the project after making a 1988 visit to the Hole In The Wall Gang camp for cancer victims in Connecticut.

"The main thing was that every time I make a film it turns out to be a harrowing experience and it has to be, otherwise it's not any good," he says.

"The only time I've been caught flat-footed is when I'm overconfident."

At the Connecticut camp — built by actor Paul Newman — Walker encountered young children with unimaginably debilitating illnesses.

But more than that, he was drawn to the "inner strength" of the young victims, most of whom had learned to cope with cancer.

"Being a parent, myself, I find it almost impossible to contemplate what it must be like," says Walker.

As a director, however, he has fashioned a truthful, moving and ultimately life-affirming story.