



Film fest closes on high note

Debut of Charleston production well-run, well-conceived

By Bill Thompson
The Post and Courier
Monday, May 5, 2008

The closing act of the first Charleston International Film Festival brought down the curtain — and the house — with screenings of four short films by a quartet of writer-directors: "Song of Pumpkin Brown" by Charleston's Brad Jayne, "The Replacement Child" by Justin Lerner, "Nickel Pumpers" by Bluffton's Todd Pringle and Matthew Mebane's "Tackle Box."

Also drawing applause were the features "On the Road With Judas"; the locally sponsored documentary "Jump!"; and the festival finale, "Hollywood Jerome."

Sold-out audiences saw films on wide-ranging subject matters, helping to make the festival an unabashed success in its inaugural year. Particularly noteworthy were a number of gems on the order of "Crazy," Rick Bieber's exceptional, affecting feature-length take on the life and career of Cowpens-born guitar legend Hank Garland, and an assembly of unusually polished short films.

The festival was shrewdly conceived, not only in its choice of format and manageable slate of films, but also in that no extravagant promises were made that could not be kept, such as star-studded opening nights.

Well-mounted and well-run, the CIFF was that rare film festival with only a few minor glitches in its debut, and savvy enough to leave itself room for growth.

Much credit must go to festival director Summer Spooner, managing director Brian Peacher, sponsorship director Tracy Roberts and production coordinator Mark Gorman — all of whom wore multiple hats with aplomb — augmented by a corps of 15 to 20 student volunteer from the College of Charleston, among them key intern Ashley Mayyou.

Film festival award winners

--Golden Crescent Award: "**Camille.**"

--Jury Award for Best Feature: "**Crazy.**"

--Jury Award for Best Short: "**Vartan LLP.**"

--Center for the Documentary Jury Award for Best Documentary: "**Raising Lucy.**"

--Best Animation: "**The Scritch-Scratch of Busy Little Hands.**"

--Blue Cross Blue Shield of South Carolina Award for Best Actress: **Vanessa White** in "Tangled Web."

--BCBS Award for Best Actor: **Matthew Wolfe** in "Left/Right."

--Best Emerging Filmmaker: **Todd** and **Matthew Wolfe** for "Left/Right."

--Audience Choice Award for Best Documentary: "**Mundaka.**"

--Audience Choice Award for Best Feature: "**Osso Bucco.**"

--Audience Choice Award for Best Short: "**Hole in the Paper Sky.**"

Screenplay awards

--Golden Crescent Screenplay Competition Award: **Natashia Sanders** for "The Spinning Wheel."

--First Runner-Up: Charleston's **Marcia Chandler Rhea** and **Margaret Ford Rogers** for "The Carolina Storyteller."

--Second Runner-Up: **O.D. McDonnell** for "In Love, In Death."

Reach **Bill Thompson** at bthompson@postandcourier.com or 937-5707.

Copyright © 1997 - 2007 the Evening Post Publishing Co.