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Breckenridge Film Festival brings a touch of Hollywood to the Colorado Rockies

Committee looking to expand program year-round

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Sonja Oliver, Correspondent | 0 comments

An estimated 2,000 film aficionados and film industry professionals celebrated the art of filmmaking at the 34th Annual Breckenridge Film Festival September 18-21.

The four-day event held in the Colorado Rockies fostered an atmosphere of creativity and inspiration with premieres, parties, educational programs and discussion forums through the viewing of independent films in numerous categories.

According to Executive Director Janice Kurbjun, out of this year's 190 independent films submitted for consideration, 66 films were selected for participation in the 2014 festival.

Animated!

University of Colorado Denver, College of Arts and Media staff and students presented their animated film, "I Need My Monster," at the Breckenridge Film Festival, Sept. 18-21. The students also conducted a children's program that covered storyboarding, animation crafts and healthy snacks. (Photo by Sonja Oliver/The Flume)



"I'd say we did extremely well. We met all of our targets. We brought in some excellent films and had a lot of sold-out screenings. And we were able to work with excellent sponsors," Kurbjun said.

The Breckenridge festival attracts a high number of filmmakers from all over the globe and includes opportunities for audiences to interact with film professionals during question-and-answer periods following the screenings. The program offers educational outreach programs, children's films, celebrity guests and independent filmmaker forums.

This year's free forums included:

"The Art of Editing," a discussion by three acclaimed editors and one filmmaker on basic story telling and the new digital aspects of editing; "The Changing Landscape of Distribution," a discussion about what it takes to get a film noticed in

today's industry environment, shown through the experiences and insights of professionals involved in film distribution; and "Superheroes, Remakes, Myths and Origins: Superman – The Movie" presented by University of Colorado at Boulder Film Studies Chair Dr. Ernesto R. Acevedo-Muñoz.

The festival opened on Thursday evening with the world premier of "It's Not You, It's Me," a feature length comedy about a "serial commitment-phobe, Dave, who is reeling from his decision to break up with his near-perfect, now ex-girlfriend. As he tries to forget her, his battling inner voices come to life and cloud his mind with conflicting desires."

Following the film's viewing, Director Nathan Ives, actor Ross McCall and actress Jessica York were on hand to take questions from the audience.

Entered into the documentary category was "Different Town," by independent filmmaker/singer/songwriter Steve Carlson. Carlson filmed the concept of making his latest album of the same name as a musical journey across nine countries and 14 different cities in search of musical inspiration.

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The slice of the musical artist's life is poignantly captured as Carlson finds not only inspiration, but love. The synchronicity of the music and filming beautifully portray this artist's accompanying creative process as he collaborates with other musicians and finds love with his future bride, Lana.

The free children's program on Saturday featured three short films plus an interactive craft program designed to encourage the art of filmmaking in children.

The films included:

"Blue," an animated short film about a world where balloons are alive and scared of children. One balloon finds he needs to learn to trust to create an unlikely friend;

"I Need My Monster," an animated film created by students at the Colorado University Denver Digital Animation Center, about a boy who needs a monster under his bed; and

"Lady B's First Winter," which follows the story of a yellow lab avalanche dog from puppyhood through her rigorous training with Telluride Ski Patrolter Gary Richard. Following Lady B's First Winter, children were invited on stage to meet Lady B, the star.

Later Saturday evening, the Riverwalk Center was filled with filmgoers for a much-anticipated premier of "Higher," the third installment of snowboarder and director Jeremy Jones' search for higher climbs and descents which take him to the fluted mountainsides of Alaska to the Shangri-La summit of Mt. Everest in Tibet.

Concluding the festival on Sunday evening was a viewing of the feature film "Una Vida," a story about a "renowned neuroscientist, Dr. Alvaro Cruz, who encounters an African American jazz singer, Una Vida, performing on the streets of the New Orleans French Quarter. Cruz hears her sing and soon concludes that she is suffering from Alzheimer's, the disease that has been his life's work – and has recently taken the life of his mother. Haunted by personal and professional regret, Cruz risks everything to unravel the mystery of Una Vida's past before her music stops."

Following the film, director Richie Adams, writer Dr. Nicolas Bazan and award-winning actress and "The Help" co-star Aunjanue Ellis took questions from the audience during a discussion about the film.

During the awards ceremony Adams received festival honors as "Best Director" and Ellis received "Best Actress."

"Best Actor" was awarded to Simon Palouk for his role as Jayson in "Emma," a short drama about a couple "brought together through two medical diagnosis which leads to a discovery of love, happiness, and the importance of letting go."

At the festival's conclusion, film-viewing audiences were given an opportunity to vote on their three favorite films. According to Kurbjun, the top three were:

"Bis Gleich," German for "see you soon" or "till then," is a short film about "an unspoken connection between two elderly neighbors, who share a daily ritual but who have never actually met, that deepens when they face the inevitable ... together."

"Flying the Feathered Edge," a documentary about Bob Hoover, 92, "who tells his own story – joined by some of the brightest minds in aerospace – and reveals hard-earned wisdom from a life pushing the edge of the flight envelope."

"Pie Lady of Pie Town," a documentary about a Dallas businesswoman who moves to a small, dusty town to bake pies. The film is about "resolve, heartache, healing and pie as a vehicle for peace."

According to the website, www.breckfilmfest.com, past festivals have hosted such guests as Alan Arkin, James Earl Jones, Robert Loggia, Marsha Mason, Sydney Pollack, Mary Steenburgen, Donald Sutherland, Eva Marie Saint, Jon Voight, Lou Diamond Phillips, Jon Favreau, Michael York, Jo Beth Williams, Connie Nielsen, Irvin Kershner, Thomas Haden Church, AnnaSophia Robb and DB Sweeney.

Established in 1981, and as one of the oldest film festivals in the country, the Breckenridge Film Festival stated vision is: "To inspire, educate and entertain the community and its visitors through the art of film-making."

The festival's stated mission is: "To guide a year-round comprehensive celebration of independent film for the community, visitors and filmmakers by presenting diverse film experiences in an authentic mountain environment."

Kurbjun said that the festival committee is looking at the goals for next year's festival in 2015 and plans are in progress to "look at a year-round program with quarterly events."

For more information email info@breckfilmfest.com or call 970-453-6200.

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