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5th Annual Ashland Independent Film Festival Breaks All Attendance Records

Records

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Ashland, Oregon - The fifth annual Ashland Independent Film Festival wraps up Monday with ticket sales already exceeding last year's record totals. This year aiff representatives believe the total number will be near 15,000. Last year's totals were just over 11,000. Films were shown April 8-10 at the Varsity Theatre in Ashland.

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The awards were divided into two categories. The juried awards

selected by local and regional members of the film press and industry selected the winners in many categories. The audience attending the films also had a chance to vote on 60 films in competition and three audience awards were handed out.

The Audience Favorites were:

The Rogue Creamery Audience Award for Best Documentary went to *Hand Of God*, a film that takes viewers beyond the headlines in a poetic story of a survivor of Catholic clergy abuse. The film is a very personal story directed by the brother of the victim. *Hand of God* has an encore screening in two theatres at 6:10p and 6:40p. Many tickets remain for both screenings.

The John C. Schweiger Audience Award for Best Feature, named for founding advisor and benefactor of the AIFF, was awarded to *Neo Ned*, a comical and touching romance between a neo-Nazi and a black woman who thinks she is Adolf Hitler.

The audience's favorite short film was *West Bank Story*, a rollicking musical comedy set in the fast-food world of the tumultuous Middle East. The film will be show with all of the short film winners in the other categories.

In the juried awards, one film made a clean sweep of the feature categories. The Best Dramatic Feature, the Gerald R. Hirschfeld Award for Best Cinematography and the Best Ensemble Acting award all went to the film *Fateless* a beautiful, dramatic story of a Hungarian Jewish boy's experiences before during and after World War II.

The award for Best Short Documentary ended up in a three way tie. One of the winners was *Undressing My Mother*, an intimate Irish film's look into a woman's physical form. Also tied was *The Death of Kevin Carter: Casualty of the Bang Bang Club*. The Oscar® nominated film covers the life of a Pulitzer prize winning photographer. Finally, the Oscar® nominated *God Sleeps in Rwanda* covers the loss and redemption for five courageous women following their country's genocide. The Best Short Film was *One Weekend a Month*, the story of a single mom's sudden mobilization of her National Guard unit to Iraq. The Best Student Film *Victoria Para Chino* is a beautiful fictional telling of a true undocumented immigration attempt.

Best Documentary Feature Length went to *Street Fight*, an Oscar® nominee, featuring the turbulent, racially charged mayoral battle between a Rhodes Scholar and an incumbent twice his age.

"We are overwhelmed by the community and visitor response," said the festival's Executive Director, Tom Olbrich. "We have had sell out after sell out. Most of the Saturday and Sunday shows were completely full. It is a great tribute to the work of the filmmakers."

The Festival's Awards Celebration also honored Henry Jaglom, one of Hollywood's most accomplished independent filmmakers. At the Celebration the AIFF presented Jaglom with their first Artistic

Achievement Award that included a video retrospective of his career.

For more information on the Ashland Independent Film Festival go to ashlandfilm.org.

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