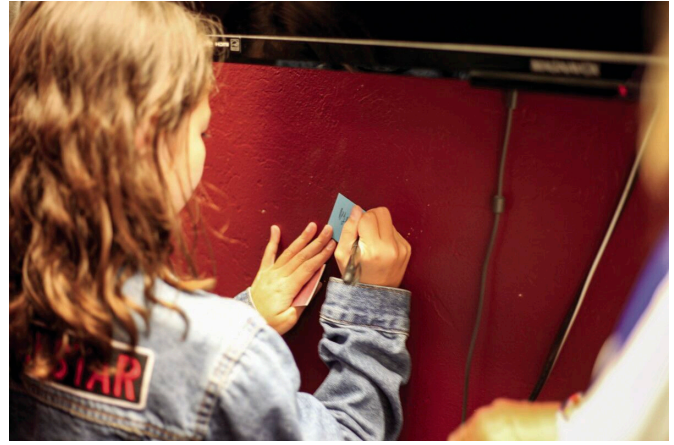


Wild Rivers Film Fest returns for blockbuster second year

September 5, 2024





The South Coast's film lovers rejoiced as the second annual Wild Rivers Film Fest hit the screens of the Redwood Theater and Chetco Playhouse this month. From genre fun, to compelling dramas, and revealing documentaries, the fest had a little something for everyone to enjoy this year.

"It was just beautiful," said President of the Film Fest Board Sue Wright, "and I loved the energy of this film crowd."

That energy was generated thanks to the diverse line-up of films and a true festival atmosphere for industry professionals and creatives to engage in. Red carpet ceremonies bookended the event on Thursday and Sunday, with an industry lunch and plenty of mingling and moviegoing in between.

Some film highlights included MJ Alhabeeb Jr.'s *Plight*, a taut thriller anchored in human drama and robust performances from Ada Pasternak and Matthew Plum. The latter was on hand for Sunday's screening and accompanied Alhabeeb in a Q&A following the screening where they discussed the location scouting, accent work, and other fascinating filmmaking insights.

There were foreign films on offer including the emotional, speculative sci-fi feature *Hakoniwa*, which made the trip across the Pacific from Japan. Horror fans were treated to the retro romp of *Deer Camp 86'*, a summer camp slasher with some creative kills and an important message at its heart. While the more experimental *Hercules Recycled 2.0* had the audience in stitches by piecing together old Hercules films for a 'mash-up movie'.

A personal favorite of the fest was Ralph Liddle's Spirit of the Wind the wind-swept true story of famous dogsled driver George Attla. Told through gorgeous natural cinematography, this film from 1979 won Best Picture at Sundance 79' and multiple plaudits at the Cannes Film Festival of the same year.

Unfortunately, the film has never received an official release for physical or streaming. This was the first time the film had been shown since that initial run of festivals. After receiving a restoration, the film was shown on Thursday of the festival with the Liddles in attendance, which was an enthralling and emotional experience.

"I couldn't believe it. It looks better than it ever has," said Liddle on the restoration.

Sunday's festivities also included the awards ceremony MC'd by organizer Dan Springen, who brought his knowledge as the Executive Director of the Orlando Film Festival here to Brookings.

Filmmakers were recognized for their films in a variety of categories. Plight took home Best Picture, with Art Thief's Arthur Egeli taking home Best Director. There were multiple local award winners as well. Calyton Sackett and Vincent DiFrancesco, two local students, each took home awards for their documentary shorts. As well as Brookings' new city manager Tim Rundel, who won the Social Awareness Award for his documentary short B'CATS or The Bryan County Alternative Transportation Society. A full list of the Fest's award winners is below.

"I'm thrilled for our filmmakers, our visitors, and our crew. Everyone just... it's so collaborative. I can't wait to do it next year," concluded Wright.

Winners

Best Picture - *Plight*

Best Director - Arthur Egeli (*Art Thief*)

Best Actor - Matthew Plum (*Plight*)

Best Actress - Jaqueline Emerson (*Art Thief*)

Best Cinematography - *Plight*

Best Supporting Performance - Keith Szarabajka

Best Short Film - *Fish in a Barrel*

Best Documentary Feature - *Run Raven Run*

Best Doc. Short - *A Long Way to Nowhere*

Best Animated Short - *Innermost*

Best Foreign Language Film - *Night in the City (India)*

Best Ensemble Cast - *Deer Camp '86*

Best Visual Effects- *Hercules Recycled 2.0*

Elmo Williams Award-Stephanie Williams (*My Rockstar*)

Jury Awards – *Bad Fish & Spirit of the Wind*

Best Musical – *Les Filles Du Roi*

Social Awareness Award – *B'CATS*

Most Inspirational – *Space, Hope, and Charity*

Focus on Nature Award – *Rolling Tides*

Audience Choice Award (Feature) – *Space, Hope, and Charity*

Audience Choice Award (Short) – *A Long Way to Nowhere*

Best Trailer – *Art Thief*

Best Poster – *Hercules Recycled 2.0*