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Mark Gordon's 'Her Majesty' wins four awards to close Marco Film Festival

By **ROGER LALONDE**, rjlalonde@naplesnews.com
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After five days and 85 films, the Marco Island Film Festival brought down its cumulative curtains, giving out 16 awards Sunday night.

The audience chose five winners, while a film festival panel picked 11.

The awards were presented at "It's a Wrap Party" at Stan's Idle Hour Seafood Restaurant in Goodland.

"Her Majesty," with Mark Gordon writing and directing, won four awards.

The audiences, who got to vote after every film, chose it as its favorite international film. The judges gave it the best narrative film award, named Sally Andrews the Rising Star Award winner, and its composer William Ross won the Dale Melbourne Herkolz Award for excellence in music.

The opening night film, "Kinsey," starring Liam Neeson and Laura Linney, was the audience's favorite feature drama and Bill Condon won the judge's award for best director.

The audience chose "Rent A Person" for the best short comedy, "Day of Independence," favorite short drama and "Baptists at our Barbecue" for favorite feature comedy.

The judges favorite film short was "Stuck," while "Tackle Box," won for best narrative short film. "Gift of the Game" and "Paper Clips" tied for best documentary.

Judges selected "King of the Corner" as its top narrative film. Peter Riegert, who won the festival's Golden Eagle Award for his work in independent films, directed and starred in the film.



David Ahnholz/Staff

Fay Takabayashi, left, dances with Harmony Schulte, 9, right, and Merrisa Roosevelt, 10, during the wrap party for the Marco Island Film Festival at Stan's Idle Hour on Goodland on Sunday night. Takabayashi is on the film festival's board of directors.

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"Black Cloud," starring and directed by Rick Schroder, won as the best feature film. Schroder also won the John Esvang Humanitarian Award for his portrayal of American Indians in the film.

Best international film was "Cubra Libré." Kyle Schickner was chosen best screenwriter for "Strange Fruit."

The cast and crew of "Freedom Park" received a special award for its involvement with the Young Filmmaker Program. Pat Berry, film festival executive director, said 10 members of the film took time each day to visit with students at Collier County schools who are creating their own two-minute movies to be shown at World Cinema Naples in the spring.

"The Frog," done by members of the School of Visual Arts in New York, won the college award for best film, followed by "The Rooster Project," created by students of the Philadelphia University of Arts.

Vickie Kelber, film festival artistic director, said the festival had its glitches but overall went very well.

"I saw more people from Marco Island come to the festival than any other time in our seven years," she said. "We had many sold-out performances and that was due to the greater variety of offerings. Peter Riegert and Leslie Nielsen were most generous with their time and added a great deal to the value of the festival."

Nielsen won the Lifetime Achievement Award for his long and varied career.

Charlie and Karen Blum of Merrillville, Ind., were among avid moviegoers who saw many films. They went to opening night and closing night, seeing 15 films in between.

Charlie Blum said, "It has been a tremendous experience. There is no question we would return again. What makes the festival so unique is the environment of Marco Island and the opportunity to chat with directors, producers, writers and stars. We participated in all the question-and-answer sessions after every show."

For Robbie Asseltine of Toronto it was his third opportunity to present at the festival in the documentary category. He won for his film, "Pass the Hat," in 2001.

"The festival is outstanding," he said. "The festival focuses on filmmakers, making it an exceptional experience. I have made lifelong friends here."

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