

## A recap and review of some of the awards given at The 34th Cleveland International Film Festival

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Film Festivals Examiner

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**The 34th Cleveland International Film Festival** released its awards recently and wrapped up a professionally run, entertaining, and inspiring eleven days that provided Clevelanders, those in from out of town, and the many filmmakers attending, a privilege that will stick with them for some time to come. Many of the awards given were in categories that were not seen enough by this space to make a fair argument against the jury choices. The categories that a good sample of films were seen in will be the ones focused on here.

### **The Roxanne T. Mueller Audience Choice Award for Best Film**

***Louder Than a Bomb***: Directed by Jon Siskel, Greg Jacobs, USA

Runners-Up for this award were ***9000 Needles***: Directed by Doug Dearth, USA, China, ***Inside Hana's Suitcase***: Directed by Larry Weinstein, Canada, Czech Republic, ***The Lottery***: Directed by Madeleine Sackler, USA, ***Saviors In the Night***: Directed by Ludi Boeken, Germany, France, and ***Soundtrack For A Revolution***: Directed by Dan Sturman, USA.

This is not a big surprise. The film played as part of the **FilmSlam** which is the program that brought area students to the film festival for the screenings as well as providing guided study before and after seeing the film. CIFF Exec. Director Marcie Goodman in an interview done with her prior to the festival (can be found [here, Part One](#) and [here, Part Two](#)) thought this film would be one that affected people more than any other. She was right on as the Audience Award is all about that. **This writer's choice for Best Film would have been *Headhunter*. Directed by Rumle Hammerich from Denmark, closely followed by *Harvest*. Directed by Marc Meyers from the USA and *Max Manus*: Directed by Espen Sandberg & Joachim Roenning from Norway, Denmark, and Germany.**

### **Central & Eastern European**

***Hipsters***: Directed by Valery Todorovsky, Russia & Co-Winner ***Honeymoos***: Directed by Goran Paskaljevic, Serbia, Albania

For the record, this writer did not see ***Hipsters***, because, to be honest, not the biggest fan of musicals on film. That art form is generally better live and in person. Obviously having different taste than the jurors on that film, the other winner, ***Honeymoos***, is a fine choice. But the best for this writer is the aforementioned ***Max Manus***: Directed by Espen Sandberg & Joachim Roenning, closely followed by **Director's Spotlight** Award Winner Jan Hrebejk's ***Shameless*** from the Czech Republic, which was one of the best dark comedies viewed during this year's festival season. It is highly recommended to check out any of Hrebejk's films that you can either at a festival or on something like Netflix which has several of his titles.

### **Jesse Epstein Humanitarian Award Sponsored by Kodak Motion Picture Film**

***Heal***: Directed by Mian Adnan Ahmad, Pakistan, USA

One of the best stories of the festival, Ahmad was in person at the festival for Q & A sessions and really made it even more clear what an inspirational and talented filmmaker he is. His short film follows a young boy, Azeem, who can heal those who have been injured by the constant chaos still hammering this war torn region on the border of Pakistan and Afghanistan. ***Heal*** is a

testament to having a vision and following it through. You can read more about Mian Adnan Ahmad in an interview done with this space last week through the link under the photo at the top of the article.

### **American Independent Award**

***Harvest***: Directed by Marc Meyers, USA

There were several really high quality American Independent films, but ***Harvest*** showed the best storytelling ability and provided audiences with perhaps the widest range of emotions of any film in the festival. You can find an interview with Marc Meyers that was done by **this writer here**. This film was closely followed by ***Toe to Toe***: Directed by Emily Abt, who was one of the festival's honorees as ***Someone to Watch***, as well as ***Trailerpark***: Directed by Jonny Look & Patrick Muhlberger. You can read more about ***Trailerpark*** in an interview with Look and Muhlberger under the photo at the top, and you can also get a spoiler free review and look at one of their three Q and A's **here**.

### **The Nesnandy + Schwartz Documentary Film Competition**

***Marwencol***: Directed by Jeff Malmberg, USA

Not particularly one of this writer's favorite films of the festival. Just not something this writer is into. The choice here would have been ***Ingredients***: Directed by Robert Bates and Produced by Brian Kimmel, USA. This film just had a more positive, uplifting subject, something that can be changed, what you eat. ***Marwencol*** just was very tough, inspiring, but a bit too depressing. A review of ***Ingredients*** done by this writer along with the Film Forum session that accompanied one of the screenings **can be found here** and an interview with Brian Kimmel done by this writer as well can be found under the photo at the top of the article. ***Bananas***: Directed by Fredrik Gertten from Nicaragua, USA, and Sweden was a close second, really exposing the travesty that is Dole Fruit Company and their negligent business practices.

### **Best Animated Short Film Award Sponsored by Reminger Co., L.P.A.**

***Lost and Found***: Directed by Philip Hunt, UK with the Runner-Up ***Alma***: Directed by Rodrigo Blass, Spain, USA

Again, not exactly what would have been chosen here by this writer. Purely on audience enjoyment alone, ***The Mouse That Soared***: Directed by Kyle Bell was the runaway winner. With the slickest animation and best sense of comedy of any of the animated shorts seen, Bell looks to have a serious future ahead of him creating edgy and hilarious work for years to come. Bell's film did however finish as the Runner Up for The Programmer's Award behind ***Get Happy***, another musical, sorry.

Be sure to head over to The 34th Cleveland International Film Festival website for the full listing of awards that were handed out by following the link below. If you are interested in following along with the coverage of the CIFF post festival or film festivals in the future, you can receive these articles directly as they are published by clicking on the "Subscribe" button at the top of this piece. You can also follow me on Twitter by searching for ericshlapack or by clicking the link below.

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