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***Circumstance, Wise Kids* Win Big at Outfest**

The Wise Kids, a vivid drama set in a Baptist congregation in South Carolina, and *Circumstance*, a bold look at forbidden love between two girls in Iran, each won two top honors at the 29th Annual Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Film Festival.

By Jeremy Kinser

The Wise Kids

The Wise Kids, a vivid drama set in a Baptist congregation in South Carolina, and *Circumstance*, a bold look at forbidden love between two girls in Iran, each won two top honors at the 29th Annual Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Film Festival.

The Wise Kids, by director Stephen Cone, won awarded the Grand Jury Award for outstanding screenplay and outstanding U.S. dramatic feature film. A statement from the jury read, "We were very moved by this film not only as a love letter to the community it depicts but as a universal portrayal of characters both coming of age and coming of middle age. We also believe this film represents American independent cinema at its best and marks the discovery of a filmmaker with a compelling cinematic voice."

Circumstance, the debut narrative feature from Maryam Keshavarz, took home the Audience Award for outstanding first U.S. dramatic feature film as well as best actress for newcomer Nikohl Boosheri. The jury described Boosheri's performance as a "fierce and sensual portrayal of a young woman struggling to balance the tumultuous landscape of her sexuality in a world in flux around her." The award for outstanding actor went to the entire cast of *Private Romeo* "for bringing fresh life to a timeless love story and infusing each moment with a 21st century immediacy that balances naked passion with longing and delivering it all with brilliant coherence."

Weekend, touted by many as the most powerful gay film since *Brokeback Mountain*, won the Grand Jury Award for outstanding international dramatic feature film for British director Andrew Haigh. The statement from the jury read, "This year's winning international dramatic feature film is a touching, authentic portrayal of gay life as we truly experience it: not stylized, not glamorized, but heartfelt, perceptive and absorbingly real. From the first frame it manages to get beneath the artifice we are used to. In its own quiet, unflinching way it leaves you a little bit changed, and yet more yourself than you ever were."

The festival's other audience awards went to *Same Difference* for outstanding documentary short film, Mitsuyo Miyazaki's *Tsuyako* for outstanding dramatic short film, David Weissman & Bill Weber's *We Were Here* for outstanding documentary feature film, and Tom Tykwer's *3* for outstanding dramatic feature film.

No Look Pass by Melissa Johnson received the Special Programming Award for Freedom, while Marie Losier's *The Ballad of Genesis and Lady Jaye* took the Special Award for Artistic Achievement.

The Special Award for Emerging Talent went to Madeleine Olnek for *Codependent Lesbian Space Alien Seeks Same*. Habana Muda won the Jury Award for outstanding documentary feature film, *Thank You For Your Call* won the Jury Award for outstanding documentary short film, and *I Don't Want to Go Back Alone* won the Jury Award for outstanding dramatic short film.

This year's **festival** showcased 163 films from 25 countries.

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