



“Weekend,” “Habana Muda” Among Top Outfest Winners

By Brian Brooks

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Andrew Haigh’s “Weekend” won the Grand Jury Award for “Outstanding International Dramatic Feature,” while Eric Brach’s “Habana Muda” took the Grand Jury Award for “Outstanding Documentary Feature Film” over the weekend at Outfest, capping the 29th Los Angeles Gay & Lesbian Film Festival. The jury nod in the U.S. dramatic feature category went to Stephen Cone’s “The Wise Kids,” which also received Outfest’s screenwriting award. Director Maryam Keshavarz’s “Circumstance” won the festival’s Audience Award for “Outstanding First U.S. Dramatic Feature” and Tom Tykwer’s “3” won Outstanding Dramatic Feature Film in the category.

The 29th Outfest took place July 7 - 17 in Los Angeles, featuring 163 films, including 67 features and 96 shorts from 25 countries. Outfest closed out Sunday night with JAnne Renton’s “The Perfect Family,” starring Kathleen Turner, Jason Ritter, Emily Deschanel and Richard Chamberlain.

Outfest winners with information, award commentary and credits provided by the festival:

Jury prizes:

Grand Jury Award for Outstanding Documentary Short Film: “Thank You for Your Call,” Directed by Shawn Nee

For its moving examination of one man’s emotional journey through a complex and systematic issue of inequity which currently and will continue to affect many of us, we award the Outfest 2011 Grand Jury Award for Outstanding Documentary Short Film to “Thank You for Your Call,” directed by Shawn Nee.

Grand Jury Award for Outstanding Dramatic Short Film: “I Don’t Want to Go Back Alone,” Directed by Daniel Ribeiro

For its sensitive and original portrayal of a young man’s self-realization of his sexuality, and for the quality of its direction, writing, and its performances, we award the Outfest 2011 Grand Jury Award for Outstanding Dramatic Short Film to I DON’T WANT TO GO BACK ALONE, directed by Daniel Ribeiro.

Grand Jury Award for Outstanding Documentary Feature Film: “Habana Muda,” Directed by Eric Brach

This year's winning documentary is a beautifully crafted narrative that reveals multiple worlds and gives us access to intimate moments and complex relationships. It's a very personal story that rises above the issues it explores, and entertains us in every moment. The Outfest 2011 Grand Jury Award for Outstanding Documentary Feature Film goes to "Habana Muda," directed by Eric Brach.

Grand Jury Award for Outstanding International Dramatic Feature Film: "Weekend," Directed by Andrew Haigh

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 Outfest 2011 Grand Jury Award for Outstanding International Dramatic Feature Film goes to "Weekend," directed by Andrew Haigh.

Grand Jury Award for Outstanding Actress in a Feature Film: Nikohl Boosheri, "Circumstance."

For her 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 Outfest 2011 Grand Jury Award for Outstanding Actress in a Feature Film goes to Nikohl Boosheri for her portrayal of Atafeh in "Circumstance."

Grand Jury Award for Outstanding Actor in a Feature Film, the 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, the Outfest 2011 Grand Jury Award for Outstanding Actor in a Feature Film goes to the entire cast of "Private Romeo."

Grand Jury Award for Outstanding Screenwriting: Stephen Cone, "The Wise Kids"

For a script that transports us to a world with rare authenticity and plunges into the lives of a myriad of characters with surprising depth and compassion and never judges its characters, the Outfest 2011 Grand Jury Award for Outstanding Screenwriting goes to Stephen Cone for "The Wise Kids."

Grand Jury Award for Outstanding U.S. Dramatic Feature Film: "The Wise Kids," Directed by Stephen Cone

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. The Outfest 2011 Grand Jury Award for Outstanding U.S. Dramatic Feature Film goes to "The Wise Kids," directed by Stephen Cone.

Audience prizes:

Audience Award for Outstanding Documentary Short Film: "Same Difference," Directed by Catherine Opie & Lisa Udelson

Audience Award for Outstanding Dramatic Short Film: "Tsuyako," Directed by Mitsuyo Miyazaki

Audience Award for Outstanding Documentary Feature Film: "We Were Here," Directed by David Weissman & Bill Weber

Audience Award for Outstanding Dramatic Feature Film: "3," Directed by Tom Tykwer

Audience Award for Outstanding First U.S. Dramatic Feature Film: "Circumstance," Directed by Maryam Keshavarz

Special Programming Awards:

Special Programming Award for Freedom: "No Look Pass," Directed by Melissa Johnson

For its unflinching look at the life of a young lesbian basketball star facing the hardships of coming out and a relationship challenged by "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" the Outfest Special Programming Award for Freedom goes to "No Look Pass."

Special Programming Award for Artistic Achievement: "The Ballad of Genesis and Lady Jaye," Directed by Marie Losier

For matching the conceptual daring and aesthetic bravado of its subjects' lives with an equally powerful filmmaking style and for never losing sight of the love story that flourished in an atmosphere of gender experimentation and conceptual music, the Outfest Special Programming Award for Artistic Achievement goes to Marie Losier, director of "The Ballad of Genesis and Lady Jaye."

Special Programming Award for Emerging Talent: Madeleine Olnek, Writer/Director, "Co-dependent Lesbian Space Alien Seeks Same."

For her witty and creative vision, her skill at eliciting memorable performances, for deftly blending old school science fiction and deadpan comedy, and for believing that true love exists even if it means going to another planet to find it, the Outfest Special Programming Award for Emerging Talent goes to Madeleine Olnek, the writer/director of "Co-dependent Lesbian Space Alien Seeks Same."