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THAT'S A WRAP!

PALM BEACH CLOSSES 14TH ANNUAL FILM FEST

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FILM AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED

PALM BEACH, FL (April 27, 2009) – It was a true celebration of film as the Palm Beach International Film Festival celebrated its 14th installment. After five days of screenings, the jury votes were tallied to determine the winners for Best Feature Film, Best Documentary, Best Short Film and Best Director, while audiences voted for *their* favorite in categories of features, documentaries and shorts. Jury winners were announced at an afternoon press conference, and the Audience Choice Awards were announced at the Closing Night Party.

Randi Emerman, PBIFF Executive Director, commented, "We enjoyed some tremendous audiences this year, which is proof positive that our community is starved for some great independent films. But at the center of our success this year were the filmmakers, who were enthusiastic, engaging and passionate!"

The jury for the 14th PBIFF consisted of: Academy Award-nominated actress **Shohreh Aghdashloo** (*House of Sand & Fog*, 24) and **Debbie Frank**, COO of the Frank Theatres, who judged the Feature Films; Director **Aaron Wells** (whose film *Rock and A Hard Place* screened at last year's fest) and writer/director **Tas Salini**, Film Professor, Art Institute of Ft. Lauderdale, who judged Documentary Films; and **Emmanuel Itier**, film producer, who judged the Short Films. The jury was particularly appreciative of the effort each filmmaker put into their projects and felt they should be commended for the creative energy that went into each film! The winning films were:

The Award for **Best Feature Film** went to two films:

Skin, directed by Anthony Fabian and starring Sophie Okonedo, Sam Neill and Alice Krige, based on the true story of a black girl who was born to two white Afrikaner parents in South Africa during the apartheid era. Commented Feature Film Jurors

Shohreh Aghdashloo and Debbie Frank, "This is a hopeful and powerful story that is still relevant after 50 years, with race issues, religion issues...all the same universal struggle to understand we are all human, despite our differences."

And *Machan*, directed by Uberto Pasolini, which was shot in Italy, Germany and Sri Lanka. Living on the margins of society, under impossible pressures, a group of desperate slum dwellers find an invitation to a handball tournament in Bavaria.

Said our jurors, "The story of these loveable losers who transcend their humble origins to make a whole new life, starts on a serious note about believing in one's self and makes you laugh along the way."

The Award for **Best Director of a Feature Film** went to Charles Martin Smith for his charming film, *The Stone of Destiny*. Said Aghdashloo and Frank, "Charles took an ordinary story and made it a human experience. None of us are from Scotland but we certainly did connect with it for the fact that everybody struggles to have their own identity."

The Award for **Best Documentary Feature** went to *The Legacy*, directed by Andrés Faucher, which made its World Premiere. Commented juror Tas Salini, "*The Legacy* is a celebration of life, hope and passion for music. It was beautifully shot and skillfully edited." Aaron Wells added, "It's a well-told story and intertwining Ludwig & David Arben's stories, each at opposite ends of their careers, made it much more than documentary about a bunch of kids and their love for music. It's one of those films where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts."

The Award for **Best Short Film** went to *Gone Fishing* directed by Chris Jones. Said juror Emmanuel Itier, "*Gone Fishing* is a tale full of humanity and love; words that are so commonly forgotten in these days and times of struggles. This is truly a film about fishing for your dreams and how the ones you love are the ones who make you shine. After watching *Gone Fishing* you really want to say to that special one: 'I love you'."

The **Audience Choice Award for Best Feature Film** went to *In My Pocket*, directed by David Lisle Johnson. The film details the harrowing journey down the dark spiral of drug addiction.

The **Audience Choice Award for Best Documentary Feature** went to *Gotta Dance*, directed by Dori Berinstein. The film chronicles the debut of the New Jersey Nets first-ever, senior citizen hip-hop dance team - 12 women and 1 man - all dance team newbies, from auditions and rehearsal through center court stardom.

There was a tie for the **Audience Choice Award for Best Short Film**, which went to *Parental Guidance* and *A Bit of Counseling*. *Parental Guidance*, written and directed by

Meredith Scott Lynn, featured best friends Max and Ava who go camping with their respective parents and remind each other of the mature high-road they are forced to take in light of the inadequacy of grownups. *A Bit of Counseling*, a comedy written and directed by Deb Hiett, Richard Kuhlman, was about a couple seeking therapy for an unusual problem, and finds an unusual solution.

The Voices of Local Films honors were awarded to “The Outlaw Emmett Deemus & The Porno Queen” or both Best Film and Audience Favorite. Best Director was awarded to Afgen Sheikh for “La Huerfana” (The Orphan).

Following the awards ceremony, PBIFF closed its 14th edition with *500 Days of Summer*, directed by Marc Webb.

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Photos are available upon request.