

YORKTON
SHORT FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL
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Mireille Dansereau's *Dark Intent*

The Golden Sheaf Awards are at the centre of what the Yorkton Short Film and Video Festival is all about. Those golden hay stacks cast in bronze are the reason filmmakers from across the country make the trek to Yorkton, Saskatchewan, each spring. In recognition of this, the Yorkton festival changed the award name in 2001 to Canada's Golden Sheaf Awards. "We wanted a name that people across Canada would recognize. It's a prestigious award it has been around a long time," says festival manager Fay Kowal.

In fact, the Yorkton Short Film and Video Festival is the longest-running festival in North America, beginning in 1950 as an international documentary festival. The event was the brainchild of James Lysyshyn, a NFB field officer stationed in Saskatchewan with a mandate to set up film councils. The first Golden Sheaf Award was presented in 1956, when it was decided that the festival should present a grand prize. Since Yorkton was surrounded by wheat fields it only made sense to integrate this into the award, and the Golden Sheafs were born.

Since that time the festival has evolved, adding dramatic productions to the lineup, then video. Various international categories were added or dropped; but the opportunity for a budding filmmaker to pick up a Golden Sheaf has remained integral to the event. This year saw over 419 films and videos submitted into competition, a two per cent increase over the previous year. Golden Sheaf's were handed out in 18 genre, nine craft and four international categories, plus additional cash and specialty awards.

The NFB had a strong presence at the awards ceremony, scooping up seven prizes, including the recent Ancey award-winning *The Boy Who Saw the Iceberg* that was named Best Animation [see pages 8 - 14 in this issue]. Directed by Paul Driessen and produced by Marcy Page, this playful short about a boy with an overactive imagination uses a multi-layered split-screen technique to present audiences with two worlds - reality and fantasy - explores the shifting boundaries between these realms. Best children's production went to

another NFB animated project, *From Far Away*, directed by Shira Avni and Serene El-haj Daoud and produced by Michael Fukushima. *From Far Away* is the animated autobiographical story of a young girl from war-torn Beirut adjusting to a new life in Canada. The film looks at how dark memories linger on, the difficulties of coping with a new culture, and speaks to the power within us all to adapt. *From Far Away* is part of the new *Talespinners* series of short animations, all based on children's stories and drawn from the literature and oral traditions of many countries.

Dark Intent was awarded the Golden Sheaf in the Best Documentary Social category. Directed by veteran Mireille Dansereau and produced by Nicole Lamothe, this NFB film delves into teenage suicide through personal reflections intercut with dramatic sequences, interviews and first-person accounts, which explore suicide from emotional, cultural and social perspectives. The Multiculturalism/Race Relations Award went to the NFB's *Who Is Albert Woo?*, a documentary directed by Hunt Hoe and produced by Germaine Wong, which explores how Asian men are stereotyped by pop culture. In the film, the director searches for an Asian role model among the narrow stereotypes found in the movies and other media, showing how media, history and cultural legacy shape identities and distort reality.

Shelley Saywell's documentary *Out of the Fire* was named best of the festival, while also picking up Golden Sheafs in the Best History Documentary and Best Direction categories. Another Golden Sheaf winner was *13 Seconds: The Kent State Shootings*, named Best of Saskatchewan. Directed by Chris Triffo and produced by Ron Goetz of Partners in Motion, the documentary chronicles the events leading up to the 13 seconds of rifle fire that left four students dead, and nine wounded at Kent State University in 1971.

The Golden Sheaf for Best Drama went to *Moon Palace* directed by David Weaver and produced by Tashi Bieler of Toronto. A combined buddy movie/romantic comedy, *Moon Palace* is a film about the curious places life leads us and how the most profound insights come in the least expected places. Coreen Mays of Vancouver was presented with the Best Script Award for her first film, *A Feeling Called Glory*. Mays also directed and produced the film, which has travelled both the Canadian and international film festival circuit, picking up numerous awards. *A Feeling Called Glory* is based on a short story by Canadian author Barbara Gowdy and takes a quirky look at the lives of two young girls, both oddballs in their own right, who have a chance encounter that changes their lives.

The comedy award went to Matt Holm's *The Lost Bundefjord Expedition*, produced through the Winnipeg Film Group. Written by Holm and Ian Handford, who describe the film as a "tragic comedy," the short is a fictional account of the first crossing of Lake Winnipeg by a multinational Scandinavian man-hauling expedition, and the humour is found in the many hilarious deadpan monologues of the survivors of the expedition trekking across the ice.

Matt Holm's *The Lost Bundefjord Expedition*



FESTIVAL WRAPS