



➤ **AFI FEST QUALITY WORTHY OF ITS NAMESAKE** [www.afi.com/afifest](http://www.afi.com/afifest) • Shortly after Toronto wraps and just a few weeks before Sundance kicks into gear, one of the most important events for American indies happens: AFI FEST. Held in conjunction with the American Film Market, the most recent event took place October 30-November 9, 2008 and—like its namesake organization—presented the work of some truly talented individuals.

“AFI FEST featured an exciting lineup of films in the competitive categories this year. The work was really accomplished and inspired, from a diverse group of talented filmmakers,” notes Rose Kuo, the fest’s artistic director.

Among this year’s highlights were screenings of Darren Aronofsky’s *The Wrestler*, Steven Soderbergh’s *Che*, Olivier Assayas’ *Summer Hours* and Danny Boyle’s *Slumdog Millionaire*. But one doesn’t need to be a household name to gain attention.

Kief Davidson’s *Kassim the Dream*, a documentary on the 2004 IBF Junior Middleweight Champion of the world, took both the International Documentary Grand Jury Prize and the Audience Award for Best Documentary, while Federico Veiroj’s *Acne* was given the Grand Jury Prize for International Feature—with a special mention to Igor Voloshin’s *Nirvana*.

“Our jury had their work cut out for them to single out one film from each group,” says Kuo. —JENNIFER M. WOOD

➤ **SCREAMFEST HORROR FILM FESTIVAL THE NEW BLOOD OF HORROR** [www.screamfestla.com](http://www.screamfestla.com) • From October 10-19, 2008, horror fans flocked to the legendary Grauman’s Chinese Theatre in Hollywood for Screamfest. A launching pad for many burgeoning directors and screenwriters, Screamfest is dedicated to celebrating the often neglected and underappreciated horror genre and is one of the leading festivals of its kind.

The big winner of the event was Toby Wilkins’ *Splinter*, which won five awards, including Best Directing and Best Picture, while Michael Dougherty’s as-yet-unreleased *Trick ‘r Treat* nabbed the Audience Choice Award.

Director Tate Steinsiek, winner of Boost Mobile’s Best of the Next in Horror Award, was ecstatic about his win and the festival in general: “The lineup of films was outstanding, as were the on-hand filmmakers and genre celebrities,” he says. “It was so validating to screen at a location as epic as the Chinese Theatre in front of a packed audience... It can certainly do amazing things for a filmmaker’s career.”

For fest founder-director Rachel Belofsky, the biggest highlight was “opening with *Trick ‘r Treat*. The second highlight was hosting the world premiere of *Splinter*. Both Michael and Toby have been in our festival previously with their short films; it was great to be able to host premieres of their feature directorial debuts.” This seems to prove Belofsky’s point that screening at the fest “is a great way for moviemakers to launch their careers, meet agents and executives, obtain distribution and/or receive great press for their film’s release date.” —KYLE RUPPRECHT

➤ **CONEY ISLAND FILM FESTIVAL CHILDLIKE SPIRIT ON BROOKLYN’S BEACHFRONT** [www.coneyislandfilmfestival.com](http://www.coneyislandfilmfestival.com) • Shortly after the final closing of Astroland, the retro-scummy amusement park and face of Coney Island, Rob Leddy rolled out another successful incarnation of his freewheeling Coney Island Film Festival.





**Call For Entries for the Woods Hole Film Festival,**  
the oldest film festival on Cape Cod and the Islands.  
Now accepting narrative features & shorts, documentary,  
animation and experimental films and screenplays.  
Apply today online through [www.woodsholefilmfestival.org](http://www.woodsholefilmfestival.org)  
or through Withoutabox. Early Deadline, March 1st.  
For more information, email [info@woodsholefilmfestival.org](mailto:info@woodsholefilmfestival.org)  
or call (508) 495-3456.

**Woods Hole**  
**Film Festival** 18

Saturday, July 25th through Saturday, August 1st, 2009



**Scratch and  
Win  
Instant Cash**



Or, just submit to the  
Milwaukee Film  
festival to win cash awards

[www.milwaukee-film.org](http://www.milwaukee-film.org)  
[general@milwaukee-film.org](mailto:general@milwaukee-film.org)

Veering away from the brainy independent film fest archetype while still delivering grade-A fare, CIFF, which took place September 26-28, 2008, is all about its location. "Filmmakers are not only provided with an enthusiastic audience," explains festival director Leddy, "but the complete Coney experience—from an opening night party that includes the Coney Island sideshow and live burlesque to a closing night ceremony where all attendees ride bumper cars!"

Those who enjoyed said festivities included Angelica and Tony Torn, directors of Best Feature *Lucky Days*, and Gabriel Judet-Weinshel, director of Best Short *The Heart Is a Hidden Camera*.

Amanda Jencsik, whose *Coney Island Saved Me!* took home the Best "Made In Coney Island" Award, says Astroland's closing was apparent, but ultimately unimportant. "It had little effect on the behaviors of those around me," she says. "Throughout all the festivities, the childlike spirit of Coney Island remained alive and kicking. Leddy and the CIFF staff made the whole festival a blast from beginning to end." —ANDREW GNERRE

**SIDEWALK MOVING PICTURE FESTIVAL ALABAMA FEST REACHES IMPRESSIVE MILESTONE** [www.sidewalkfest.com](http://www.sidewalkfest.com)

Going above and beyond for a 10-year-old's birthday celebration usually consists of springing for the helium balloons and an extra pizza. But Catherine Pfitzer did things a little bigger for her baby, Alabama's Sidewalk Moving Picture Festival.

"For our 10th anniversary we were able to provide our audiences with an unprecedented number of feature-length films to choose from," explains Pfitzer, Sidewalk's executive director. "We packed in a whopping 42 feature films into our weekend, which is almost twice as many as we screened in 2006."

With this kind of growth, Sidewalk, which took place September 26-28, 2008 in Birmingham, may be ready to shed that "Best Kept Secret" moniker *MM* once bestowed upon it.

Winners of the decade-old fest included Barry Jenkins as Best Director for *Medicine for Melancholy*; David Pomes for his Best Narrative Feature *Cook County*; Mike Brune for his Best Short Film *The Adventure*; and Harris Mendheim for the Audience Choice Alabama Film *Skiptracers*.

In addition to the competitive categories, this year's beefed-up lineup also included out-of-competition Spotlight Screenings of critically acclaimed flicks like *Baghead*, *Let the Right One In*, *Humboldt County* and *Dance of the Dead*.

"Sidewalk takes great pride in providing our filmmakers with an amazing festival experience," notes Pfitzer. —ANDREW GNERRE

**BENDFILM FESTIVAL ARMY OF VOLUNTEERS DRIVES THE FEST TO SUCCESS** [www.bendfilm.org](http://www.bendfilm.org)

Jim Bailey, president of BendFilm, describes his volunteer crew as an "army." Together, they put on Oregon's BendFilm Festival, which ran October 9-12, 2008. During that time, Bailey and his team awarded Tom Quinn's *The New Year Parade* two prizes: Best Director and Best Supporting Actress for Jennifer Welch. Jacob Pander's *Selfless* was awarded in a variety of categories, including Best Feature, Best Editing and Best Screenplay.

"In addition to our generous cash awards, our individual treatment of filmmakers is second to none," says Bailey. "The people of Bend and the army of volunteers of BendFilm are delighted to show filmmakers small-town hospitality and their

Cineastes take Brooklyn by storm in *Coney Island*.

