

WISCONSIN FILM FESTIVAL

Wisconsin Film Festival announces 2008 audience awards

Kristian Knutsen on Wednesday 04/16/2008 2:07 pm , (5) Recommendations

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The Wisconsin Film Festival has announced the winners of its two Audience Awards, selected by filmgoers over the course of the four-day celebration of cinema held over the first weekend of April. The Polish drama *Time to Die* won the award for Best Narrative Film, while the familial quest covered in *New Year Baby* won the award for Best Documentary Film.

Time to Die, titled *Pora Umierać* in Poland and directed by Dorota Kedzierzawska, screened early in the afternoon on Saturday, April 5 at the Majestic Theatre. Shot in black-and-white, the film follows the day-to-day experience of Aniela (played by the then 91-year-old Polish actress Danuta Szaflarska) during the sunset of her life. "Having seen the film, however, I can honestly say don't let the title fool you -- *Pora umierać* wasn't quite the terminal experience that it lets on," writes John Benninghouse in his [review](#) of the film as seen at the festival. "While the title gives away the ending, we see Aniela pass away as happy as one can."

The documentary *New Year Baby*, directed by Socheata Poeuv, screened twice at the festival, on Saturday and Sunday afternoon at the smaller auditorium in the Chazen Museum of Art. Poeuv tells the story of her family's escape from the Khmer Rouge and subsequent life in Texas, culminating in a return to Cambodia. It will be screening again in Wisconsin on Tuesday, May 13 at the John Michael Kohler Arts Center in Sheboygan in a [Community Cinema](#) event hosted by *Independent Lens* on PBS in advance of its national television broadcast on Tuesday, May 27.

Both Audience Awards at the Wisconsin Film Festival are sponsored by Steep & Brew Coffee, a Madison roaster with cafes on State Street and the west side. These two films received the highest average scores in their respective categories as voted upon by filmgoers, who submitted ballots ranking the title on a one-to-five scale at the end of eligible screenings.

The "Wisconsin's Own" and "Wisconsin Student Shorts" winners were announced in advance of the festival. This year, the prizes were presented as "jury awards" rather than as individual awards (like "documentary" or "narrative") as in previous years. These films were supported in the festival by Case IH Agriculture based in Racine.

The "Wisconsin's Own" winners are:

- *Alaska Far Away* by Paul Hill and Joan Juster
- *The Closing Hour* by Grey Gerling
- *The European Kid* by Ian Martin
- *Madison* by Brent Notbohm
- *Perceval* by Tate Bunker

The jurors for these films were Ali Selim (director of the 2006 Wisconsin Film Festival title *Sweet Land* that shared the award for Best Dramatic Feature that year), Jim Kreul (a Wisconsin Film Festival founder, filmmaker, and professor at UNC-Wilmington), and Brijetta Hall Walker (a documentary filmmaker and lecturer at Columbia College in Chicago).

The "Wisconsin Student Shorts" winners are:

- *Otto's Day* by Ji-Sun O
- *Passing Through* by Jonathan Bothun
- *Them's Trying Times to be a Canine* by Joseph Kraemer

The jurors for these films were Katherine Turczan (a filmmaker as well as professor and chair of the Media Arts Department at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design), Thomas Pope (a screenwriter and lecturer at MCAD), Jim Stanger (a film editor), Max Selim (a filmmaker and screenwriter), and Ali Salim. Comments on these winning entries and other Wisconsin Student Shorts can be found in a [review](#) of the festival screening.

Congrats to all of the winners!

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