

Imago Film Festival Wraps Up After Days of Spectacular Music, Short Films and Presentations

(ELGIN, IL-April 4, 2016) From Tuesday-Saturday, March 29-April 2, Judson University hosted the Imago Film Festival on its Elgin campus. The festival is designed to showcase independent films from around the world that deal with faith and ethics. This year marked the 12th annual festival.



On Tuesday, March 29, the festival opened with screenings of the first block of films in competition for the \$1,000 grand prize. The films included “The Scarlet Cord” (a documentary about human trafficking) and “Zero” (an effects-driven story about a grieving father and son in a world losing gravity). Several filmmakers introduced films, including the producer of “A Certain Kind of Light” who emphasized the importance of giving people a chance to tell their stories.

Wednesday, March 30, the festival continued with Pixar story artist Matthew Luhn, who told the story of his journey to faith and his life as an artist during the morning chapel service. Coming from a family of toy store owners, Luhn connected his devotion to play to his work as an animator. In his keynote speech, he described how he “creates stories with heart.” Through a fuller awareness of story formula, human beings, he said, can find the means to change themselves for the better. Festival goers also heard live music from Mass Anthem.



On Thursday, March 31, the festival continued with screenings of the second block of films in competition. The block included “Not the End” (a time travel story that asks questions about personal responsibility and true love) and “Heartbreak and Beauty” (an experimental film that depicts relationships through the thoughts and dance of its characters).



Christian bands Citizen Way and Graveyards to Gardens performed musical sets to a standing-room-only crowd on Friday, April 1. This day, filmmaker and Judson Professor Matt Bilen also premiered his short film, "The Return." The cast and crew of Bilen's film discussed the film's parallels with the prodigal son story that they discovered in the course of filming. The night ended with an exclusive 20-minute preview of MGM Studio and Paramount Picture's upcoming film, "Ben-Hur" with a video introduction provided by Mark Burnett and Roma Downey.

On Saturday, April 2, the festival came to a close with its elegant red carpet celebration, complete with food, live music and a best-dressed contest. The band, Raze the Darkness played live music, and the Imago Lifetime Achievement Award was given to producer Ralph Winter (whose work includes the "Star Trek," "X-Men" and "Fantastic Four" films as well as "I, Robot," "The Giver" and the recent sequel to "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon").

Winter shared ideas drawn from his extensive career in Hollywood with the packed house at the Thompson Center, noting how his faith appears in his work through his devotion to excellent stories. In particular, he said that he likes science fiction and superhero stories because they allow him to depict serious issues in a way that engages the audience unexpectedly. (Many in the crowd remained during intermission and after the evening's events to talk with Winter.)



The evening ended with an awards ceremony and a screening of the festival-winning films. The grand-prize winner was "We Can't Live Without Cosmos," an animated film by Russian director Konstantin Bronzit. The film follows the dream of two astronauts and depicts their friendship as something that transcends the limits of space and time. One festival judge simply described the film as "perfect."

SAVE THE DATE: The 13th annual Imago Film Festival is tentatively scheduled for April 4-8 (more at www.imagofilmfestival.com).