

BERLINALE ANTICS



BLACK BALLOONERS RHYNS WAKEFIELD, CLAIRE MCCARTHY, DENSON BAKER AND ELISSA DOWN; JULIAN SHAW WITH PARTNER SARAH; KATH SHELPER; ERIK THOMSON AT AUSTRALIAN FAVOURITE LOCAL BAR WHITE TRASH; CATHY RANDALL AND KEISHA CASTLE-HUGHES AT THE HEY HEY IT'S ESTHER BLUEBURGER Q&A.

From February 7-17, the 58th Berlinale turned out crisp temperatures, thin blue skies and red carpet triumphs for festival director Dieter Kosslick. While 4000 press clambered over the likes of Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Martin Scorsese, Daniel Day-Lewis and mega Bollywood star Shah Rukh Khan, Australian participation did not go unnoticed. Over a dozen films screened in different sections, often with crowds sitting in the aisles and others turned away. For the most part, the Australian content impressed with well developed scripts, excellent performances, strong directing debuts and sharp production qualities. During the ten-day festival, almost 100 Australian industry professionals joined the swarms to buzz between the screenings, openings, film market and Berlin bars.

Opening the competition for Generation 14plus and taking out the Crystal Bear for best feature-length film in the section was Elissa Down's *The Black Balloon*. Down, donned in Dinnigan, cracked up her team during the Q & A as she enlightened audiences on her motivating question after watching similar themed films *Rainman* and *What's Eating Gilbert Grape*: 'where is all the poo?!', she cried. *The Black Balloon* answers that literally and metaphorically. In the same category, Cathy Randall's vibrant *Hey Hey It's Esther Blueburger* had similar effects on the young, sophisticated German audiences who wiped tears and giggled at nuances, surprising even the filmmakers. *Nana* was awarded the Crystal Bear for best short film in the Generation Kplus section.

In Panorama, young Sydney based New Zealander Julian Shaw was awarded second place in the Panorama Audience Awards for his documentary, *Darling! The Pieter-Dirk Uys Story* and Benjamin Gilmour's drama of Pakistani village life, *Son of a Lion*, produced by Carolyn Johnson made jaws drop with 'just how he managed to get this film made'.

Peter Carstairs' film *September* (already seen a release in Australia) and Warwick Thornton and Kath Shelper's warm short *Nana* were applauded and also relevant to audiences engaged in the European coverage of the Australian government's national apology to indigenous Australia.

Fellow writers, directors, producers, composers, actors and cinematographers included Bonnie Elliott, Ben Hackworth, Kath Shelper, Matteo Bruno, Jimmy 'The Exploder', Denson Baker, Sally Cheshire and Muchael Yezerski - White Trash bar anyone?

Ruby Boukabou

FUN AND NOISE - THE FCCA AWARDS

Noise made precisely that when it swept up six critical nods at the Film Critics Circle of Australia (FCCA) held its annual awards event on February 1 at Sydney's Cinema Paris followed by a cocktail function at the Bavarian Bier Café.

A cultural, non-profit organisation and a member of international film press body FIPRESCI, the Film Critics Circle of Australia is the national body of professional film critics in Australia whose aims are to promote excellence and integrity in the art of film criticism and support the advancement of Australian and international film culture.

2008 WINNERS

Best Film
Noise (prod. Trevor Blainey)

Best Director
Matthew Saville (*Noise*)

Best Actor
Brendan Cowell (*Noise*)

Best Actress
Joan Chen (*The Home Song Stories*)

Best Actor Supporting Role
Marton Csokas (*Romulus, My Father*)

Best Actress Supporting Role
Emma Booth (*Clubland*)

Best Editor
Geoff Hitchins (*Noise*)

Best Music Score
Bryony Marks (*Noise*)

Best Cinematography - Joint Award
Laszlo Baranyai (*Noise*) &
Nigel Bluck (*The Home Song Stories*)

Special Acknowledgement
Kodi Smit-McPhee (for his contribution to *Romulus, My Father*)

Best Script
Tony Ayres (*The Home Song Stories*)

Best Feature Documentary
Forbidden Lie\$

Best Short Documentary
Who Killed Dr Bogle & Mrs Chandler