

Charlotte Jewish Film Festival a Rousing Success

The Fourth Annual Charlotte Jewish Film Festival delighted audiences with its wide array of spectacular films. From the pre-Festival screening of *Rape of Europa* to the closing night film *Sixty Six* at Ballantyne Village Theater, filmgoers were treated to Jewish cinema at its best.

The Festival has continued to grow from year to year, and this year's Festival drew 1,300 attendees. "We are thrilled by the unbelievable turnout at this year's films," says Co-Director Jodi Werner Greenwald. "It's validation that the Charlotte community is as excited about this event as Festival planners are."

The Festival kicked off with a bang at the Mint Museum for a pre-Festival screening of *Rape of Europa*. An overflowing crowd came to see this poignant documentary about the Nazi regime's systematic looting and destruction of Europe's art treasures. The battle over some of these priceless artworks still rages on today.

The Festival officially opened to a sold-out crowd on Saturday night, March 1, with the controversial and hard-hitting Israeli film *What A Wonderful Place*. Patrons enjoyed a delicious dessert reception prior to the film and were treated to a spirited discussion about this movie with the film's writer and director, Eyal Halfon.

Another highlight of the Festival was the Interfaith Night of Film at Temple Beth El, which even during a heavy rainstorm

brought together 200 Charlotteans of the three Abrahamic faiths to experience *God and Allah Need to Talk: A Film For Healing and Reconciliation*. Dr. Maria Hanlin of Mecklenburg Ministries lead a panel discussion of Jewish, Christian and Muslim leaders after the film.

"What an extraordinary experience as people of different faiths came together to listen and learn from one another. Everyone present appreciated the interfaith dialogue, learned from 'the other,' and valued the chance to understand more about people of different faiths. Let's do this again next year."

- Maria Hanlin

Filmgoers also enjoyed the excellent documentaries *Toots, Souvenirs* and *39 Pounds of Love*, which were hailed as audience favorites.

Please mark your calendars for Wednesday, April 30, when another terrific film, *Finding Family*, sponsored by Temple Israel, Temple Beth El, LJCC, Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte and the Charlotte Jewish Film Festival, will be shown in Lerner Center at the Levine JCC in conjunction with Yom HaShoah. One of the producers of the film, scholar and new Charlottean Racelle Weiman, will address the crowd and take audience questions.

Plans are already under way for

the fifth anniversary Festival slated for the first week of March 2009. More details coming soon. If you would like to volunteer or become a patron or sponsor, please contact info@charlottejewishfilm.com.

The Charlotte Jewish Film Festival is a project of the Charlotte Chapter of Hadassah and the Levine JCC and is made possible by the generous support of individual patrons, companies and organizations including the Arts and Science Council, the Light Factory, Diamonds Direct South Park, the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte, Mercer, Hearst Service Center, Hearst Entertainment & Syndication, and White Rhino. Last, but certainly not least, a big thanks goes out to the countless volunteers who gave of their time and creativity to bringing this week of magical film to Charlotte. ☆



Charlotte Jewish Film Festival

Photos courtesy Mel Morganstein



Israeli Filmmaker Eyal Halfon (center) with co-directors Debby Block and Jodi Greenwald.



Jane Rabinovitz and volunteer Robin Leavitt.



Local filmmaker Michael Swanson and Light Factory's Director of Film, Wendy Fishman.



Larry Horowitz, CLU, ChFC

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