

The 10th Charlotte Jewish Film Festival

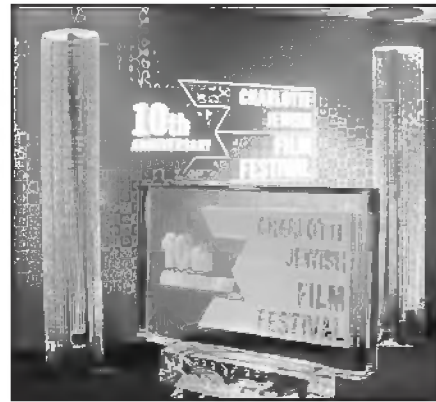
Impacting the Charlotte Community's Heads, Hearts, and Funny Bone

The 10th edition of the Charlotte Jewish Film Festival (CJFF) has wrapped and this annual cultural highlight exceeded all expectations for attendance, and impact. Charlotte and the surrounding area experienced more than 20 films that reflected the CJFF mission to illuminate and entertain a diverse group of film lovers through the lens of the Jewish experience.

From the opening night screening of the Israeli comic hit *Hunt-*



Director Adam Hirsch, Fay Tenenbaum (aka *The Cake Lady*), CJFF director Rick Willenzik, and producer Brittany Tenenbaum after screening of "The Cake Lady."



The ice sculpture at the opening night reception.



Leon Levine and Jerry Levin attended "When Jews Were Funny."



The audience enjoys "When Jews Were Funny."

ing *Elephants* which sold out two theatres at Ballantyne to the HBO documentary *50 Children: The Rescue Mission of Mr. and Mrs. Kraus* which chronicled saving children from Nazi Germany and was seen by dozens of children of all faiths, the CJFF demonstrated the power of cinema to bridge cultures and build understanding.

Cinema is the most influential art form of modern times and the reactions of the CJFF audiences, which totaled more than 3,500 over the course of the two-week event, demonstrated that influence. A teacher from Covenant Day School, Becky Makla, spoke of her students' reaction after seeing *50 Children*, "They were overflowing with emotion - anger at our government, sadness for children unable to wave goodbye, fear of the guards in the hotel, puzzlement of the Kraus' motives, and many more. The film allowed them to draw conclusions about all racism and how subtle it can be."

Commented CJFF Director Rick Willenzik, "The Charlotte Jewish Film Festival has truly become a community staple and credit goes to those that have built

the festival in the past and all who are currently involved in executing an incredible event."

Willenzik also noted the record support from patrons and corporate partners without whom none of the inspiring and entertaining events would have been possible. "The entire community has embraced this festival warmly and is anxious to be a part of it," said Willenzik.

The second night of the festival, CJFF set a single night attendance record with the showing of the hilarious *When Jews Were Funny*. The big crowd was entertained by a comedian before the show. Three nights later, that record was broken as just under 500 people packed Temple Israel for *The Jewish Cardinal*, which was followed by an interfaith panel discussion.

Other key participants in CJFF 10 were the filmmakers and subjects themselves. *50 Children* director Steven Pressman and *Out in the Dark* director Michael Mayer attended as did Fay Tenenbaum, the charming Cake Lady, along with Adam Hirsch, the film's director. Ninety-three-year-old Ms. Tenenbaum drove from

Atlanta, bringing cakes with her.

Attendance at the CJFF's Mondays at the Lake series, co-sponsored by the Lake Norman Jewish Council, more than doubled last year's similar screenings at the Lake. "This is an area that we certainly want to continue to develop in future years," said Willenzik.

Plans for next year's CJFF are already under way. Want to get involved? Drop an email to info@charlottejewishfilm.com. ✪

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"50 Children" Voted Audience Favorite

50 Children was voted by attendees as this year's CJFF Audience Favorite. When notified of the award, director Steven Pressman said, "I am truly honored by this recognition for my film. I'm also grateful to everyone at the Charlotte Jewish Film Festival for inviting me to appear with the film, which made for a very memorable first visit to your wonderful city."

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