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That's a wrap



From left, Telluride filmmaker Ben Knight, Mountainfilm Program Director Emily Long and filmmaker Travis Rummel at Mountainfilm's Closing Picnic on Monday. Knight and Rummel's film "DamNation" took home the Audience Choice Award at the 36th Annual Mountainfilm Festival. [Photo by Melissa Plantz]

'DamNation' wins audience choice award at 36th annual Mountainfilm Festival

By Heather Sackett
Editor

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Audiences experienced rain, snow, sun, high-speed skiing descents, a world-famous magician, surfers, climbers, coffee talks and a flying dog at the 36th Annual Mountainfilm Festival.

Festival Director David Holbrooke said he was proud that few people were turned away because of full theaters. Turn-aways were roughly 20 percent of what they had been in past years, he said.

"That permeated the rest of the festival experience for people," Holbrooke said. "They felt more likely that they were going to get into the things they wanted to see."

Despite skies that threatened rain, crowds turned out for Saturday's Colorado Avenue Ice Cream Social and were treated to the sight of renowned climber and BASE jumper Dean Potter jumping out of a plane and flying over town in a wingsuit before pulling his chute for a safe landing.

Saturday night's Adrenaline program — a collection of adventure shorts — was moved inside the Michael D. Palm Theatre because of rain, which turned to snow by the time the show was over. But Monday's weather couldn't have been nicer for the Closing Picnic and Award Ceremony in Town Park.

This year's Student Award, chosen by a panel of local students, went to "E-Team," a movie about the Emergencies Team of Human Rights Watch who shows the world what actually happens in conflict zones around the world. Students also recognized "Mending the Line" and "Mission Blue" as movies that will most inspire their generation.

The 2014 Cinematography Award went to "Once Upon a Forest" for its arresting images of the great tropical forests of the world. "E-Team" and "DamNation" were runners-up.

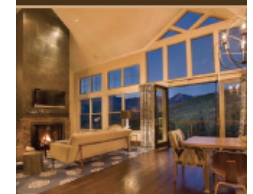
"Tashi and the Monk" won the 2014 Norman Vaughan Indomitable Spirit Award. The film, about a former monk who creates a spiritual community for orphaned and neglected children, also won the Moving Mountains Prize. The non-profit organization featured in the film will receive \$3,000. "Vessel," a film about offering women access to the abortion pill by taking them into international waters and "Emptying the Skies," about the slaughter of songbirds, were runners-up.

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Mountainfilm Festival Director David Holbrooke presented the 2014 Festival Director's Award to the incomparable Katie Lee. The folk singer, writer, actress and photographer was featured in two Mountainfilm movies this year: "DamNation" and "Wrenched."

"I felt Katie Lee embodies so much of what we are about at this festival: adventure, speaking one's mind, standing up for justice, being bold and art," Holbrooke said.

"High Tension," which featured the confrontation between Swiss climber Ueli Steck and a group of Sherpas won the \$1,000 juried Charlie Fowler Award.

Telluride filmmaker Ben Knight and Felt Soul Media walked away with arguably the biggest prize of the festival: the Audience Choice Award.

"The environmental movement loses a lot of battles, but in the case of damming, it's going in the right direction," Holbrooke said.

Interest in DamNation was huge as people packed the Michael D. Palm Theatre so tight on Friday that festival-goers sat in the aisles.

"We are just incredibly grateful," Knight said after receiving the award at Monday's closing picnic.

This year was unique, said Program Director Emily Long, because four films garnered enough votes for the Audience Choice Award that they would have won in any other year.

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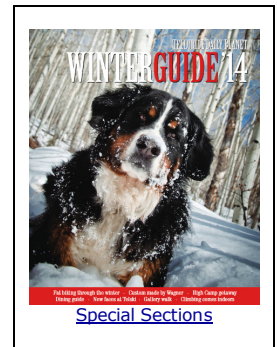
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