

'Mary Loss of Soul' Gives Palm Beach International Film Festival a Reason to Shine

Film Festivals Have the Power to Recognize Independent Filmmakers



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As the [Palm Beach International Film Festival](#) marked its 19th big year in Palm Beach County, Florida, the event drew crowds of attendees and filmmakers ready to take part in a cultural flurry of film and fun. The event took place from April 3 - April 10, 2014, in theaters around Palm Beach County. This year there were 164 films shown of which 14 were World premieres, 8 were North American premieres and 8 were U.S. premieres.

At the center of the Film Festival, which was headquartered at the Hyatt Place Delray, were the filmmakers. **Randi Emerman**, [PBIFE](#) Director, commented, "This year, for me, was refreshing and inspiring to have had the honor to discover so many wonderful filmmakers from the corners of the earth. The films unveiled a wide swath of experiences...they entertained and dazzled us, they made us laugh and cry, but more importantly, they made us think!" Year after year, Randi's drive, dedication and enthusiasm make this festival as successful as it is, leading the pack as a world-class event.

In addition to the screening of first-time viewed films, there were other activities that catered to diversified tastes. A 'Tribute to Classic Hollywood' gave attendees a chance to meet the filmmakers and delve into the creative side of their personality. Fun took on new meaning at an 'Evening of Shorts' spotlighting the shorts films and even some videos and documentaries. A Visionary Award was given to **Rick McKay**, one of the great artists of the theater. **Robert Morse**, a tremendous actor of all time, was presented with the Lifetime Achievement Award for all his accomplishments throughout his career. Film seminars set the stage for the memorable films that would follow over the eight day period. As an appropriate end to a fabulous eight days of film, the last evening brought filmgoers a chance to see the newest film by director and actor, **Jason Priestley**, called 'Cas & Dylan' which was a drama film with a focus on comedy as well. Star of the film was **Richard Dreyfuss**, no stranger to the film industry. Priestley made a guest appearance as his film debuted. The traditional 'It's A Wrap' party took place immediately after the film.

One of my most magical experiences of the event was the opportunity to cover the World premiere of the film, 'Mary Loss of Soul'. Film festivals have always been a media favorite and a chance to learn all the secrets that go into a successful film and all the hard work that produces a top-rated film. As I sat and watched this thriller, I felt at one with the characters because of the brilliant way in which it was developed. This was the story of Mary, a young, typical and vivacious teenager that witnessed an event so horrific that it took her soul. We embark on the journey with Mary and her close-knit family to try and bring Mary's soul back. While there were parts that were spine-tingling, the film also touched your heart in mystical ways. There were many supernatural symbols that stirred up curiosity and intrigue as they were meant to do. The northeastern scenery was gorgeous, mixing solace, serenity and haunting images all in one and each actor fit their role masterfully. The ending brought us joy and relief with the film becoming an example of the power of belief.

One of the most personalized parts of the whole evening was the presence of the director, **Jennifer B. White**, and producer, **Stewart Huey** for the entire showing. They were eager to share their experiences as they put the many parts of the film together. Having close to two weeks to get the film finished, they worked long hours and put themselves totally into the production. The dedication was well worth the effort as there is nothing more rewarding than to see your film on the big screen. They spoke with a strong sense of passion and an enthusiasm that this will definitely only be the beginning of a long career in film production. In addition to becoming a director, Jennifer has continued to use her creativity and imagination to write books and scripts alike, which gives her much satisfaction. Directing is a new door that has opened for her and she plans to take full advantage of everything that goes with it, taking it to new realms. Speaking with both White



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and Huey, I felt like I had known them for some time because of their warmth and willingness to share their experiences that brought this film to fruition. It was an amazing way to end my day.

As is traditional with the [Palm Beach International Film Festival](#), one of the most exciting parts of the festival is the award ceremony because all those filmgoers that attended these viewings over the eight day period, had the final say for Best Feature Film, Best Short Film and Best Documentary Film. Best Feature Film was awarded to **CATHEDRAL CANYON**, directed by **Paul Davis** and starring **Winsor Harmon, Noelle Wheeler** and **Lorenzo Lamas**. A story set in both sprawling modern [Phoenix](#) and the fringe, rural polygamist communities of Northern Arizona, this film presents a hidden connection between these two very different worlds that permits the shocking acts of these cults to continue. Best Short Film went to **TOBACCO BURN**, directed by **Justin Liberman** and starring **Stephen Tyrone Williams, Julian Rozzell Jr.** and **Alicia Thompson**. Based on an oral history from the W.P.A. Writers, Tobacco Burn is set thirty-five years before the Civil War at the height of American slavery. When two of the enslaved weigh the complexities of killing their overseer, each develop a different understanding towards violence, acting on which could cost all of them their lives. Finally, the Best Documentary Film was presented to **LION ARK**, directed by **Tim Phillips**. This film follows the world's most ambitious and daring animal rescue, with a narrative compiled from film, interviews, conversations and reactions as events unfolded. Following a shocking exposé Bolivia bans animal circuses. But the circuses defy the law and the team behind the investigation returns to track them down and save the animals. Stunning cinematography captures the confrontations, heartache and risks, before a joyous finale sees 25 lions airlifted to freedom. A story of bravery, compassion, a country that said 'no' to cruelty and how attitudes towards animals changed across a continent.

Besides bringing an outlet for cultural diversity to Palm Beach County, this event brings additional tourist revenue to the Palm Beaches and creates even more fans for [Palm Beach International Film Festival](#) every year. Attendance continues to grow as the festival gets bigger and better.

Published by [Hope Wilkos](#)

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