

THE BEST IN BLACK FILM SHOWCASE AT SAN DIEGO BLACK FILM FESTIVAL

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Contributing Writer

Film goers were treated to an extraordinary display of creative talent this weekend at the 4th Annual San Diego Black Film Festival, formerly the Noir Film Festival. Over 33 independent films spanning drama, documentary, and comedy were showcased, with 12 garnering top awards. The Festival spotlights the best in African American cinema and is co-sponsored by the Black Historical Society of San Diego.

"The 23rd Psalm," a murder/mystery involving redemption and transformation took the "Best Film" award. "Never in my wildest fanta-



Greg Carter, Director, Best Docudrama, "Hurricane Katrina & A Project Named Desire"

sies did I think we would win this award," said an ecstatic Christopher Odom, who directed the 89-minute drama. "I got the idea from "Crash," he said, adding that structurally, it borrows from such classics as "Rashomon" and "Citizen Caine" in its method of telling the story from different characters' perspectives. With a budget of only \$75,000, Odom said the cast and crew worked on "favors, waivers, blood, sweat and tears—and blessings." It's an important film for people to see, he adds, because it's faith-based and promotes the theme of belief in oneself.

The value of listening to our elders and taking note of the lessons of history was explored in "Poet of

See FESTIVAL on page B6



Karen Huff, Chairman, Black Historical Society of San Diego



(l-r) Christopher Odom (Best Director, "23rd Psalm"), Cornelius Booker III - 23rd Psalm, Karen Huff and Mialyn Hanna



Mialyn Hanna, Director, Best Documentary, "White Shadows"



Ray and Daron Fordham, Best Director, Musical, "Confessions of a Thug."



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... value of listening to our cl-
... and taking note of the lessons
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See FESTIVAL on page B6



Thursday, February 8, 2007

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at Home and Sole Sister: The
Joys and Pain of Single Black
Women.

Festival

continued from page A8
the *Swinging Blade*, which won the
"Best Message Film" award. Co-
written by Linda Bannister and
James Hurd, Jr. (Hurd directed and
had a leading role in the film as well,
the 23-minute dramatic short brings
to light the cruelty and injustice of
"debt peonage," a system of slavery
that existed in the turpentine planta-
tions of rural Florida and Georgia
that effectively enslaved people up
until the 1970's. Hurd grew up in
Wewahatcha, Florida, where his
grandfather, the son of slaves, filled
him with stories of this era that re-
mained with him through his adult
life and finally found creative ex-
pression in the play "Turpentine
Jake," (also co-written with Linda
Bannister), and later became the
genesis for the movie. Set in the
dense woods of Wewahatcha, near
Panama City, Florida, and filled with
characters that have the mark of
authenticity, the film is rich in poetry
and sheds light on an account of
black history that, for most, has never
been heard.

"I'm very impressed with the
quality of the film produced here,"
said Turisha Singleton, a San Diego
writer and filmmaker who teaches
screenwriting at SDSU. Challenged
with small budgets, independent
filmmakers "have to scratch for
everything," she said. The effort and
drive that the films exemplify, com-
bined with the quality of the stories
and filmmaking techniques is inspi-
ring.

In addition to the screening of
each movie at the United Artists
Theaters in Horton Plaza, the pro-
gram included an opening reception
and party, a "meet and greet" ce-

lebrity mixer, a panel discussion on
the challenges of independent film-
making, as well as a gala awards
ceremony at Galileo 101 in the
Gaslamp, where filmmakers cele-
brated a weekend of culture and
the arts.

Award winners are as follows:
Best Film: The 23rd Psalm,
Christopher C. Odum, Director
Best Lead Actor: Markinam
Stanley, Jr., The 23rd Psalm
Best Supporting Actor: Armita
Champion, The 23rd Psalm
Best Director, Drama: J.D.
Cochran. Paved With Good Inten-
tions

Best Actor: J. August Richards,
Paved With Good Intentions
Best Comedy: Sammy and Mary,
Hugh Plantin

Best Director, Musical: Daron
Fordham, Confessions of a Thug
Best Actor in a Cutting-Edge
Film, Drama: Simeon Henderson,
Vacant

Best Short: Low, Brian
Stemmler, Director
Best Documentary: White Shad-
ows, Mialyn Hatana, Director

Best Docudrama: Hurricane
Kazrina and a Project Named De-
s i r e
Greg Carter, Director

Best Message Film: Poet of the
Swinging Blade, James L. Hurd, Di-
rector

"Congratulations to all the win-
ners," said Karen Huff, chairman
of the San Diego Black Historical
Society and a chief organizer of the
Festival. "I have a feeling these films
will fare quite well in the coming
year."

Heroes

continued from page B1
History Month Awards last night
(Feb. 1) for their outstanding accom-
plishments and service within the
San Diego community.

The Black History Month awards



(left sitting) James Hurd, Jr., holding microphone - Dr. Linda Bannister, Co-Writers, Co-Producers, Best
Message Film, "Poet of the Swinging Blade"



2nd from r - Cornelius Booker III, far right - Christopher Odum - Best Film, "23rd Psalm"

stream

... from page A3
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Sun - Sat 10am - 5pm

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Preliminary Draw Dates - Feb. 1 (on Feb. 24th, Mar. 3rd, Mar. 10th)
Cash prizes: 1st prize will win \$10,000