



## Local films, stars awarded at expo

by Naomi Volk

Local filmmakers won big once more at the Long Island International Film Expo amid high spirits last week as Long Island's finest filmmakers gathered to celebrate independent film and praise each other's achievements at the Bellmore Movies.

Bellmore's Sal Del Guidice won Best Long Island Feature for "Long Island Uncovered," and Baldwin's Fred Carpenter won Best Audience Award for "Jesse."

The awards ceremony was hosted by Brian O'Halloran, an actor about to be featured in the play "Submitted" at the Fringe Festival in Greenwich Village.

Mr. O'Halloran has also been seen in "Chasing Amy," "Clerks," "Dogma" and will be in the upcoming horror movie "The Gathering."

Taking the podium, he said, "What I love about the Long Island International

Film Expo (LIIFE) is that it really gives filmmakers a chance to have their work shown." Of the organizer of the LIIFE, Debra Markowitz, he said, "Debbie does a great job organizing."

Ms. Markowitz said the festival had showed 116 short and feature-length films and had included a couple of in-person appearances by the writer Nelson Demille.

The night began with a music video from '70s icon Martha Wash, who came onto the stage and began to sing "Everybody Dance Now," for which she had provided lead vocals in the original recording. Audience members began to clap and dance in their seats.

However, the reaction was nothing compared to the enthusiasm audience members exhibited when Ms. Wash began to sing the Weather Girls' hit, "It's Raining Men." Women stood up and danced in the aisles, singing along to the chorus.

Merrick Life photo by Douglas Finlay



**WINNING FEELINGS:** Bellmore's Sal Del Guidice, left, who won Best Director of a Long Island Feature for "Long Island Uncovered," poses with Long Island's incomparable indie filmmaker Ed Burns ("Saving Private Ryan," "The Brothers McMullen"), who won a Creative Achievement Award from LIIFE.

### Long Island filmmaker feted

Of the many awards, Long Island independent filmmaker Ed Burns of Valley Stream, whose film credits

include "The Brothers McMullen," "27 Dresses" and "Saving Private Ryan," was presented LIIFE's prestigious Creative Achievement Award.

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# Local films and stars win big at film expo

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Regarding independent filmmaking, Mr. Burns told the crowd, "It's such a brutal business, you will run into roadblocks no matter how big your budget is."

He also gave the audience words of inspiration, saying, "My message is that it [independent filmmaking] is absolutely worth the pain of it all. It isn't about the success, there is just no greater way to spend your life than making the kinds of movies you want to make."

Mr. Burns will soon be seen in the movie "Newlyweds," which closed the Tribeca Film Festival, and in "Man on a Ledge," which also stars Sam Worthington and was shot at Gold Coast Studios in Bethpage.

Other celebrities attending included Kevin Brown, who plays Dot Com on NBC's hit show "30 Rock," and Anthony Manganio, who will appear in CBS's upcoming crime drama, "Person of Interest," and is finishing his last season of "Rescue Me."

Mr. Brown recently filmed the independent film "Excuse Me for Living" with Melissa Archer from "One Life to Live." Of the film, Mr. Brown said, "30 Rock changed my life and is exciting, but indie films allow me to do roles I wouldn't otherwise get." Ms. Archer said it was her first independent film, but it "felt like a little family."

Mr. Brown, who is also a stand-up comedian and had to catch a flight to Atlanta to perform, warmed up the crowd with his heartfelt speech in praise of casting director Donna McKenna, who has cast him in four films.

## The heck with Hollywood

Bob Hansen, the president/chairman of

The Long Island Film/TV Foundation, said the festival is "getting bigger and better all the time. There's a great talent pool here. We must be doing something right, getting films from all over the world. The [heck] with Hollywood, we have all the talent we need right here."

Nassau County Executive Edward Mangano was in attendance, accepting the Benefactor of the Arts award and saying, "My administration is open to assisting actors, film directors, producers, and we also have Gold Coast Studios, a full production house for all your production needs. Thanks to all of you for bringing smiles to all the people of Nassau County."

## It's the water

Mr. Del Guidice agreed that Nassau County had something special for film, joking that the reason he won awards two years in a row was because of "the water in Bellmore."

Mr. Del Guidice, whose movie is about how aging Long Island rockers balance music and personal lives, said, "It's about a passion we have for our music and the families that support us."

Mr. Carpenter said his award felt "amazing." He especially appreciated that the acceptance of the film was happening on Long Island. His next two projects, "Jesse 2" and "High School Reunion," will both be shot on Long Island.

Federico Castelluccio, from "The Sopranos," won for best direction in the short film "Lily of the Feast." He said the festival was "a wonderful experience. There are really top-notch films here, stuff you can't really get in studios because indie films are produced by the artists themselves."

Mr. Castelluccio said such festivals are

important because the festival "gives young people all over the world an opportunity to showcase their films as actors, producers or directors and show their abilities they might not get to show otherwise, so this is a perfect forum."

Mr. Castelluccio's co-star on "The Sopranos," Lenny Venito, was also in attendance. He told this newspaper that "With indie films your vision isn't compromised as it would be working for the studios."

He also said, "I will always support these kinds of festivals, I see this thing getting bigger. It's the right thing. Let's support New York and film here. I get a real hometown feel here... This is where you build a reputation, here."

One person certainly beginning to do just that was the winner of the script writing competition, John Flint, for his script, "Silence."

Whether they came with a reputation



**AUDIENCE PLEASER:** Baldwin's Fred Carpenter won a Best Audience Award for "Jesse," starring Armand Assante. While filming his movie in a convenience store, police responded to a call of a robbery in progress. Of course, clearer heads prevailed.

already built or were in the process of doing so, Long Island's finest and biggest supporters of independent film flocked to Bellmore, sharing in a special celebration of their shared passion.

— Additional reporting by Douglas Finlay

Merrick Life photo by Douglas Finlay