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## The Other Venice Film Festival Is SRO

### Local films win first Abbot awards



*Abbot Award winner Michael Pressman and his wife and co-star Lisa Chess.*



*Santa Monica resident Marek Probosz, Abbot Award winner, and*

*his children, Victor (on his shoulders) and Valentina.*



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*Festival co-founders Gary Ellenberg, A.J. Peralta and Ruby DeLaCasas.*

Named for Venice founder Abbot Kinney, the Abbot became the latest film award, when the Other Venice Film Festival made its debut last weekend.

Dedicated to screening full-length, short and animated films that, in the words of its founders, “embody the spirit, energy and diversity of Venice,” the festival attracted capacity crowds to the Electric Lodge.

The opening night feature film, *Frankie & Johnny Are Married*, directed by and starring Venice director/actor Michael Pressman, and co-starring his wife Lisa Chess, won the first Abbot Award, for excellence in filmmaking, at the festival’s closing ceremonies on Sunday, March 21. A romantic comedy, set and shot primarily in Venice, chronicles the couple’s real-life misadventures mounting an equity-waiver play, *Frankie And Johnny In The Clair De Lune*, in an effort to revitalize their marriage.

Pressman’s film will open in Los Angeles at the Westside Pavilion Cinemas on May 28.

The Abbot Award for Most Excellent Short Film went to life-long resident Stanley Mitchell for his documentary, *Venice, America*, which explores Venice’s social and economic diversity and the challenges its residents face in creating and preserving their unique community.

The Audience Choice Abbot Awards went to Santa Monica residents actor/director Marek Proboasz for the world premiere of his feature film *Y.M.I.*, a portrayal of the forces that infect an enormous sector of today’s youth worldwide, and brothers Alastair and Rob Thorne for their comedic short film *tic(K)*, a loopy Anglo-Appalachian comedy about a woman’s battle against her own biological clock.

Venice has long been an epicenter for LA artists and filmmakers who have expanded the language of underground, alternative cinema.

Actor/producer Chris Mulkey, who has lived in Venice for more than 20 years with his wife, actress and artist Karen Landry, was honored at a special Saturday night screening of his classic independent comedy *Patty Rocks*, and received a Local Maverick Spotlight Abbot Award. Chris’ band, *Blue Hyway*, played a free concert outside the festival on Sunday afternoon.

Rounding out the weekend was a panel discussion, “Breaking Through,” featuring longtime Venice producer/director/actor Tony Bill; Camryn Manheim, star of ABC’s *The Practice*, Sean Welch, producer of the Oscar-nominated documentary, *Spellbound*, Mulkey and Pressman.

“We want to thank everyone involved for their incredible support of our opening season,” said Gary Ellenberg, festival co-founder and programming director. “The festival wouldn’t have been possible without all of our filmmakers and panelists who gave so much of their time and energy, participating in a series of intense Q&A sessions. Venice is one of the birthplaces of cinema and independent film continues to thrive here. All of our Abbot Award winners have close ties to the community and we hope this is just the beginning of what will become a great annual event for all to enjoy.”

For more information on The Other Venice Film Festival, go to [www.veniceOfilmfest.com](http://www.veniceOfilmfest.com).