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Katharine Isabelle and Brendan Fletcher star in Robert Cuffley's award-winning film, *Turning Paige*.

Calgary director wins big for his first feature film

BY MARKE ANDREWS

Attendance at the 20th Vancouver International Film Festival was up by at least 12,000 over the 2000 festival.

With late Friday figures still to be counted, attendance exceeded 132,000 for the 15½-day festival, up from the 120,000 who attended the 14-day 2000 event. It was expected to top the 132,000 who attended the 17-day 1999 festival.

Festival director Alan Franey said audiences responded most favourably to issue films and to populist entertainment.

"There was a lot of interest in films dealing with contemporary issues, and the popular entertainment films also did well," said Franey. "A few of the historical films and films that fell between these two categories kind of got lost in the shuffle."

The addition of the 1,100-seat Vogue Theatre helped attendance figures, although the festival lost two other venues this year, Robson Square and the Van East Cinema.

The festival announced the winners of 10 awards Friday.

First-time director Robert Cuffley, of Calgary, was a big winner, capturing the

VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, 2001

\$5,000 Telefilm Canada Award for best emerging Western Canadian feature film director for *Turning Paige*, as well as being named co-winner, along with *Turning Paige* writing partner Jason Long, of the Rogers Video Western Canada Screenwriter Award, which has a prize of \$3,000 or a high-end computer system.

Turning Paige, shot in Moncton, is a drama/comedy about a family whose members must face their past.

The \$4,000 Telefilm Canada Award for best emerging director of a Western Canadian short or mid-length film went to B.C.'s Jeff Cunningham and Adam Locke-Norton for *10-Speed*, a 25-minute work about a boy who desperately wants a new bicycle.

Mirror Image, by Taiwanese director Hsiao Ya-Chuan, won the \$5,000 Dragons and Tigers Award for Young Cinema.

This year's festival had a strong doc-

umentary lineup, the strongest film being *Jung: In the Land of the Mujaheddin*, a film about the war in Afghanistan which won the National Film Board of Canada Award for best documentary feature. The Diversity in Spirit Award, sponsored by the B.C. Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services, was awarded to *Promises*, a documentary that focussed on Israeli and Palestinian children who live in Palestine.

Vancouver actress Frida Betrani captured the Women in Film and Video Vancouver Artistic Merit Award for her performance as a young wife in *Last Wedding*, while *The New Country*, a Swedish feature about two immigrants living in the Nordic country, won the Chief Dan George Humanitarian Award.

Promises also won the Air Canada People's Choice Award for most popular film, one of two awards decided by audience ballot. Film-goers also selected *Obaachan's Garden*, Vancouver documentarist Linda Ohama's film about her 103-year-old grandmother, for the Federal Express Award for most popular Canadian film.

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