



For Immediate Release...

February 21, 2018

MORE THAN 36,000 CAME TOGETHER FOR THE 2018 ATLANTA JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL

The 18th Annual Event Reveals Jury and Audience Award Winners + Closing Night Attracts Record Attendance



Post-film discussion with comedian Gilbert Gottfried, subject of the documentary [Gilbert](#).

ATLANTA – After 23 days and over 190 screenings, the 2018 Atlanta Jewish Film Festival (AJFF) has come to a stirring finale. The festival attracted more than 36,000 moviegoers and was filled with premieres, sweeping epics, personal narratives, unconventional perspectives, and stories that intersect with other communities. Closing Night was celebrated with over 1,600 guests – the highest Closing Night attendance ever – on Thursday, February 15, at the Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre, where the Southeast Premiere screening of *The Last Suit* was featured. After a standing ovation, the screening was followed by a post-film discussion with the writer and director Pablo Solarz and a dessert reception. The 18th annual festival was pleased to provide new audience experiences this year: to accommodate growing audiences, AJFF made the move to Regal Hollywood 24 and Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre became the new home for both Opening and Closing Night festivities.

As ever, the festival's 350+ guest speakers brought out the best of the 2018 lineup, with enriching discussions with filmmakers, scholars, academics, authors, and other experts throughout the festival. An appearance by **Brandon Polansky** of *Keep the Change*, **Gilbert Gottfried** of *Gilbert*, and **Sophie Brooks** and **Matthew Shear** of *The Boy Downstairs* were among the highlights of this year's special lineup of guest speakers. A list of additional guest speakers can be found [here](#).

The Atlanta Jewish Film Festival is pleased to announce the 2018 Audience Award and Jury Prize winners. Jury Prizes went to best Narrative Feature, Documentary Feature and Short, along with Emerging Filmmaker, Building Bridges and Human Rights. Winners of the Jury Prize can be found [here](#).

This year's esteemed jury participants and winners included:

2018 Narrative Jury Prize

The Narrative Prize went to the feature-length fiction film that exceeds all others in total artistry, direction, script, cinematography, acting, and overall storytelling. Narrative jury participants included: **Dan Mirvish** (filmmaker and co-founder of Slamdance Film Festival); **Scott Orlin** (journalist and correspondent for Cinema Magazine and Hollywood Foreign Press Association); **Sara Grasberg** (graduate student from Emory University studying Film & Media Studies).

- *Best Narrative:* [The Testament](#)

"Told through the unique lens of a Holocaust historian's quest for justice, The Testament is a powerful cinematic exploration of how one defines and maintains Jewish family and identity that also deals with other timely themes including complicity, community responsibility and especially the pursuit of truth and facts."

2018 Documentary Jury Prize

This Documentary Prize went to the feature-length non-fiction film that exceeds all others in total artistry, direction, script, cinematography, acting, and overall storytelling. Documentary jury participants included: **Nina Gilden Seavey** (filmmaker and research professor for The George Washington University); **Brantly Watts** (writer, director, producer, and senior filmmaker-in-residence for Atlanta Film Society); **Taylor Hartley** (undergraduate student from University of West Georgia studying Film & Video Production).

- *Best Documentary:* [Death in the Terminal](#)

"Death in the Terminal unfolds for its viewer like a taut thriller from Hitchcock and its use of found footage gives us a new perspective into the world of security cameras in which we all live. The filmmaker has created a work that is both original in its conception and devastating in its impact. Brilliant!"

2018 Shorts Jury Prize

The Shorts Prize went to the film, with a run time of 40 minutes or fewer, which exceeds all others in total artistry, direction, script, cinematography, acting, and overall storytelling. Shorts jury participants included: **Deborah Riley Draper** (writer and director of *Olympic Pride* and *American Prejudice*); **Curt Holman** (writer and film critic for *Creative Loafing* and *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*); **Melissa Simpson** (undergraduate student from University of North Georgia studying Film & Digital Media).

- *Best Short:* [On My Way Out: The Secret Life of Nani and Popi](#)

"On My Way Out: The Secret Life of Nani and Popi introduces a storybook, 65-year marriage between two 95 year-olds, and then drops a bomb on the audience. As Nani, Popi and their adult children struggle to process a stunning revelation, the viewer shares an almost painfully intimate experience. Genuinely wrenching with moments of levity, On My Way Out presents a complex family dilemma and withholds easy answers."

2018 Emerging Filmmaker Jury Prize

An Emerging Filmmaker Prize was awarded to a rising creative talent, whose film shows exceptional skill and artistry. Emerging Filmmaker jury participants included: **Alicia Malone** (film reporter and host for Filmstruck and Fandango); **Steve Mensch** (president and general manager of Studio Operations and Tyler Perry Studios); **Gentry Parks** (graduate student from Savannah College of Art & Design studying Film & Television Production).

- *Emerging Filmmaker:* Astrid Schult, [Winter Hunt](#)

"With only one principle location and four characters, Astrid Schult was able to create a compelling thriller that felt much larger than the individual parts. The cinematography of Winter Hunt created a distinct and dark mood enhanced by the powerful use of silence."

2018 Building Bridges Jury Prize

The Building Bridges Prize will honor the film that most exemplifies the mission of AJFF, informed by founder and partner American Jewish Committee, to foster understanding among communities of diverse religious, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. Building Bridges jury participants included: **Shawn Levy** (film critic and author); **Melanie Maron Pell** (associate director and director of regional engagement in the Department of Regional Offices of American Jewish Committee); **Alex Preston** (graduate student from Savannah College of Art & Design studying Film & Television Production).

- *Building Bridges:* [Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds: The Conductor Zubin Mehta](#)

"Through an intimate portrait of a remarkable life, this film demonstrates how music can be an olive branch, a tool of diplomacy, and a universal language that transcends cultural boundaries. A satisfying narrative, a joyful lesson in music history, and a loving depiction of man who cares as much about humanity as about art."

2018 Human Rights Jury Prize

The Human Rights Prize is awarded to the film that most powerfully captures the perseverance and strength of those whose sense of justice guides them in the face of bigotry, inequality, and persecution. Human Rights jury participants included: **Catherine Dana** (novelist and professor at Emory University's Tam Institute for Jewish Studies); **Jessica Ritchey** (writer and film critic for RogerBert.com); **Joseph Tiller** (undergraduate student from University of North Georgia studying Film & Digital Media).

- *Human Rights:* [Death in the Terminal](#)

"Death in the Terminal is a documentary that reminds us of the porous nature of truth and how appearances can be deceiving. As question swirl over the cost of a security state and due process, Death in the Terminal is a reminder that the decision we make in a moment of fear can have a lasting impact. Using three conflicting points of view the viewer becomes one more participant having to sort out the events of that day and possibly be unsettled by the truth of how they would react from such a situation. This feeling of reflection serves as a reminder that the fight for human rights and the fight not to give into our reflex prejudices is a constant struggle."

The 2018 Audience Awards, presented by the Helen Marie Stern Memorial Fund, went to Best Narrative, Best Documentary, and Best Short. After each screening, attendees complete a short tear ballot, with scores tallied and adjusted to a 4-point scale. Audience Award winning films receive a custom made statuette after the festival. More on Jury Prizes announced can be found [here](#).

This year's Audience Awards winners included:

- *Best Narrative:* [The Last Suit](#)
- *Best Documentary:* [Itzhak](#)
- *Best Short:* [The Number on Great-Grandpa's Arm](#)

For more information and to stay up-to-date on year-round programming, visit [AJFF.org](#). Stay connected via social media on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#) and use #AJFF2018. A variety of high-resolution photos from this year's festival can be found [here](#).

About Atlanta Jewish Film Festival: AJFF's mission is to entertain and engage diverse audiences with film through a Jewish lens while simultaneously challenging conventional perspectives on culture and history, life in Israel, and the work of Jewish artists—particularly where these stories intersect with other communities. AJFF features year-round programs, including several tent pole events such as its annual Film Festival, AJFF Selects, AJFF On Campus, Cinebash, and the Icon Award for Contributions to the Cinematic Arts. In addition to its core programs, AJFF continues to work alongside its many partner organizations to support the greater Atlanta community while raising the bar for film festivals worldwide. Founded by the Atlanta Regional Office of American Jewish Committee (AJC) in 2000, since 2014, AJFF has operated as an independent non-profit arts organization that continues an active partnership with its founding agency, American Jewish Committee. For more information, visit [AJFF.org](#) or join the conversation on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#).

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