

Film News: 'Sole Survivor' is Top Film at 2013 Best of the Midwest Awards

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on December 4, 2013 - 8:32pm

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CHICAGO – With a packed house, an electric atmosphere, a new video display board and a number of cast members from TV's "Chicago Fire" present, the Midwest Independent Film Festival 'Best of the Midwest' Awards took place on Tuesday, December 3rd, at The Underground night club in Chicago. The documentary 'Sole Survivor' – directed by Ky Dickens – won Best Feature Film.

The Midwest Independent Film Festival convenes every first Tuesday of the month throughout the year, and showcases films directly associated with the Midwest area. The "Best of the Midwest" Awards honors the films, performances and technical achievements of the 2013 Festival. Festival Director Mike McNamara hosted the ceremony, and special guest presenters included Betsy Steinberg, Director of the Illinois Film Office, and David Eigenberg of the NBC-TV series "Chicago Fire."



Director Ky Dickens (center) Accepts Best Feature for 'Sole Survivor'
Photo credit: Patrick McDonald for HollywoodChicago.com

For best screenplay, female actor, male actor, director and feature, excerpts from interviews by HollywoodChicago.com are below. The 2013 Best of the Midwest Award Winners are as followed.



Best Music Video

Winner: "Dream Bigger Dreams" directed by Sandro

COMMENT: An adaptation of a Nick Cave song, the multi layered beauty of the dreamscape can be experienced by [clicking here](#). [16]



Best Short Film

Winner: "Paraiso," directed by Nadav Kurtz

COMMENT: This film was on the short list for inclusion into an Oscar nomination, and is an incredible and simple elegy of survival in the daily grind called the workplace...and life. A must see.

**Best Editing**

Winner: Bill Sebastian and Clinton Noel Williams, "QWERTY"

COMMENT: This quirky film "QWERTY" – culminating in a tense Scrabble tournament – was given a sports-like final edit by the team of Sebastian and Williams.

**Best Cinematography**

Winner: Ross Riege, "The Kings of Summer"

COMMENT: One of the surprising films of summer 2013, this fun and engaging coming of age was given simple elegance under the eye of cinematographer Ross Riege.

**Best Screenplay**

Winner: Todd Looby, "Be Good"

COMMENT: Here is what writer/director Todd Looby told HollywoodChicago.com in June of this year, about his independent gem...

HollywoodChicago.com: This is obviously an autobiographical film. What incident or series of incidents in your own life first inspired you to make it a screenplay and film?

Todd Looby: I initially conceived of the story when I had a two week period in taking over the primary care of our daughter. During that time I felt kind of stuck, in the sense that I didn't realize the amount of work it would take and that I couldn't fulfill my work as an independent filmmaker. I needed the time to work to get something out there, in order to get to the actual filmmaking work. I was fully unable to do that, because taking care of a baby takes up all the time. So we were stuck in a situation where my wife wanted to stay at home, but we were doing the opposite.

That period did end relatively quickly, but I took all of the anxiety that I felt during that period and hyperbolized it into something dramatic, adding fictional elements to make it more into an exciting story.

**Best Female Actor**

Winner: Aemilia Scott, 'Best if Used By'

COMMENT: This wonderfully odd short film about love in a grocery store cooler was brought to life by a superior cast, headed by writer/director and lead female actor, Aemilia Scott

HollywoodChicago.com: What does it mean to you to get recognition from a film festival that is truly Midwest?

Aemilia Scott: I think it's perfect, because at least in my experience some of the best work I've ever seen in film has come out of the Midwest. It's almost more beautiful to be celebrated among the other films – which are so amazing and original – and all are labors of love.

**Best Male Actor**

Winner: Thomas J. Madden, "Be Good"

COMMENT: Madden was the actor who substituted for writer/director Todd Looby, in the story of his new fatherhood.

HollywoodChicago.com: What did you relate most to within your character in 'Be Good'?

Thomas J. Madden: It was the conflict of being a father, but not necessarily wanting to be a father. I'm not a Dad, but what hit me was this guy wanted to live his dream of being a filmmaker, but now he has a family and responsibility. That is getting in the way, and he doesn't want to acknowledge that – he longs a bit for the luxury of time to be a screenwriter.

**Best Director**

Winner: Jordan Vogt-Roberts, "The Kings of Summer"

COMMENT: The up-and-coming Mr. Vogt-Roberts crafted a tribute to the freedoms of being a teenager and celebrating the summer season. He talked to HollywoodChicago.com in 2010, when he screened his short film "Successful Alcoholics" at the Midwest Independent Film Festival.

HollywoodChicago.com: What was magical to you about making movies when you began as a child?

Jordan Vogt-Roberts: Honestly, humor is how I always related to people, and comedy was always big to me when I was a kid. I would play with my action figures, and there were home movies of me setting up these villages and hiding dog treats, then narrating as I had my dog walk

through the town, smashing the buildings. It wasn't much later until I decided I wanted to get into film, but I remember thinking cinematically, like slow motion. I remember thinking I wish life were like that.

**Best Feature**

Winner: "Sole Survivor," directed by Ky Dickens

COMMENT: This stunning document explores a unlikely subject – the sole survivors of plane crashes over the years. Director Ky Dickens also recently received honors at the Women in Film Chicago Focus Awards, and HollywoodChicago.com talked to her there.

HollywoodChicago.com: What was the genesis of 'Sole Survivor,' and was the approach you took to bring it to fruition?

Ky Dickens: The genesis of it was personal. In high school, I switched places with a good friend of mine before I got into a car, and he ended up dying in an accident in that car. I was always interested in survivor stories. When I turned 28 years old, I had this nagging feeling to do something important all the time, and I realized that was my survivor skill.

I wonder how people healed from this, and in my research of survivors of all types, I read about the sole survivor of a plane crash. I became interested in that topic and then it became 'it' – the subject of my new film.

The Midwest Independent Film Festival kicks off again on the first Tuesday of the new year, February 4th, 2014. [Click here](#) [17] for details about the festival and how you can participate in what Chicago Magazine called "the place to be and be seen for veteran pros and up-and-comers."



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